

Commentary

January 2000

American Power—For What? *A Symposium*

Elliott Abrams • William F. Buckley, Jr. • Eliot A. Cohen

Francis Fukuyama • Frank J. Gaffney, Jr. • Owen Harries • Jacob Heilbrunn

Robert Kagan • Zalmay Khalilzad • Jeane J. Kirkpatrick

Charles Krauthammer • William Kristol • Michael Ledeen • Edward N. Luttwak

Walter A. McDougall • Joshua Muravchik • Joseph S. Nye, Jr.

David Rieff • Peter W. Rodman • Robert W. Tucker • Paul Wolfowitz

The Birthday Party *Avner Holtzman*

Art, Excrement, and “Sensation”
Steven C. Munson

Jazz Masterpieces: A Finale
Terry Teachout

Edward Said’s Fabrications: An Exchange
Justus Reid Weiner and Critics

Books in Review

Paul Johnson • Algis Valiunas • Mark Goldblatt
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Commentary

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service@commentarymagazine.com

Letters to the editor:
letters@commentarymagazine.com

Editorial inquiries:
editorial@commentarymagazine.com

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American Jewish
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 Bruce M. Ramer,
President

Letters from Readers

Edward Said's Fabrications

TO THE EDITOR:

Justus Reid Weiner's "My Beautiful Old House' and Other Fabrications by Edward Said" [September 1999], largely a collage of petty and irrelevant calumny, has a clearly political and ideological motive, namely, the neutralization of one of the most important and credible advocates of Palestinian rights at a most critical time in the unfolding peace process. The article also has a broader objective, which is, as Edward Said himself has noted, "discrediting . . . Palestinian claims to return and compensation."

Mr. Weiner's main argument comes down to this: if Edward Said's nuclear family maintained its major domicile in Cairo rather than Jerusalem, then Said is not a Palestinian refugee. This reveals more about Mr. Weiner's prejudices than it does about the complica-

tions of a cosmopolitan identity: for Said's family to have maintained affiliations in both Cairo and Jerusalem need be no more surprising or improbable than it would be for a Jewish American to maintain citizenship and identity in both the U.S. and Israel.

If Mr. Weiner's research were as meticulous and credible as he would have us believe, it is odd that he learned only recently—"after completing the manuscript of [my] article"—about the publication of Said's memoir of his early life, *Out of Place*. Could Mr. Weiner, having spent the last three years researching Said, honestly not have known that this book was coming out? As Christopher Hitchens pointed out in an article in the *Nation*, Said's memoir was commissioned in 1989 and begun in 1994. Moreover, the fact that Said was working on a memoir was mentioned in scores of publications such as the *Columbia Record* and the *Lon-*

don Review of Books. Mr. Weiner himself cites the article in the *London Review*, thus making his professed ignorance of the impending publication of the memoir even more ridiculous.

Mr. Weiner suggests that Said wrote his memoir in order to "camouflage and backfill" his previous statements regarding his youth, and thus to protect himself from Mr. Weiner's findings. Nobody else seems to agree. Said's book has so far received favorable reviews from respected journals and newspapers. Furthermore, people familiar with his work and life story do not see the alleged contradiction between his current account and his earlier ones (see Hitchens in the *Nation*, Israeli dissident Israel Shahak, quoted by Julian Borger in the [London] *Guardian*, and Said's former classmate Haig Boyadjian quoted in *Counterpunch*). Many others have disputed Mr. Weiner's account in articles and letters to the editor.

Indeed, several quotations from Said's own work—apparently disregarded by Mr. Weiner—show that he has never made conflicting claims about his family's residence in Jerusalem or denied that his family spent considerable time in Egypt. What is equally plausible is that Mr. Weiner, who once worked at Israel's Ministry of Justice apologizing for Israeli human-rights violations, caught wind of Said's project and sought a commission to discredit it. Why else would someone pay an inconspicuous scribe to spend three years searching for dirt on a prominent Palestinian thinker?

Other omissions, mistakes, and prejudiced comments in Mr. Weiner's article are too numerous to mention, but we will cite a few brief examples to illustrate the degree to which Mr. Weiner is biased. He describes the Institute for Palestine Studies as a "pro-PLO think tank" (hardly the case); he contends that the

legal procedure for claiming compensation and reparations in Israel is "simplicity itself" (questionable); he asks why Said has "not lifted a finger to secure the financial restitution due him" (as Said has noted, his family did try to obtain compensation and redress, but was denied; efforts became futile after the promulgation of the 1950 absentee-property law). And, as Said has written (in *Al-Abram*), Mr. Weiner commits a series of further factual errors and (perhaps intentional) oversights such as failing to note that Said's mother held a Palestinian passport and misidentifying Boulos Said, Wadie Said's cousin, as Edward's uncle.

More significant and striking, however, is the ar-

ticle's clear intention of discrediting Palestinian grievances stemming from the 1948 war, and of promoting what has become a common and highly dishonest litany of right-wing Zionism: that a great number of Palestinian nationalists have harbored

myth-driven passions that have animated the revanchist program . . . whose expanding political ambitions often seem . . . permanently insusceptible of being satisfied through the normal processes of politics.

Notice the words and phrases Mr. Weiner uses: animated, myth-driven passions, revanchist, expanding, permanently insusceptible. The logic is that Pales-

tinian nationalism is somehow abnormal and that Palestinians have no one but themselves to blame for their plight. For example, Mr. Weiner's assertion that "the war of 1948 was instigated not by Israel but by the Palestinian-Arab leadership, which launched hostilities against the Jewish inhabitants of Palestine after refusing to accept the UN partition resolution" is familiar Zionist boilerplate that seeks to obscure the complexity of the events of the time with a well-placed verb: to say that hostilities were "launched" is to imply that there were none before the Arabs initiated them, an interpretation clearly not supported by the historical record, and which has been challenged even in Israel it-

self (note the recent decision in Israel to use history textbooks that present the Palestinian "side of the story").

Thus, Mr. Weiner's attack on Edward Said is not only an attempt to discredit a leading intellectual and humanist but also part of an unceasing right-wing Zionist program to reinterpret selectively and dishonestly the history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In our view, it is not Said's work but rather Mr. Weiner's article that emerges as a contrivance of "deception and outright obfuscations carefully tailored to strengthen [a] wider ideological agenda."

MARWAN D. HANANIA

FREDERICK M. HOYT

Cornell University
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TO THE EDITOR:

We are a group of New York-based American Jews and Arab-Americans who founded the Arab-Jewish Peace Group to promote a just resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. We are writing to express our dismay at the article by Justus Reid Weiner claiming that the renowned, Jerusalem-born Palestinian literary critic Edward Said "fabricated" much of his life story.

The article, engaging one of the Palestinians' most articulate spokesman in a minute-by-minute justification of the first twelve years of his life, is simply wrong on one important point after another, as Edward Said himself has already shown in the weekly edition of *Al-Abram*, where each one of Mr. Weiner's allegations is addressed and refuted, as well as in his newly published memoir, *Out of Place*, where he describes in vivid detail his

early life in Jerusalem, Cairo, and Beirut.

Claims like Mr. Weiner's hurt the Palestinians in the same way that revisionist historians who try to deny the Holocaust hurt the Jewish people. This not only hinders the peace process but also the reconciliation that must take place for the survival and healing of both peoples.

In recent years, Edward Said has "advocated the acknowledgment by each other of the Palestinian and Jewish peoples' past sufferings" as a means toward peaceful coexistence; he himself has taken Arab musicians on a tour of Buchenwald. Indeed, his insistence on reconciliation through learning the history of mutual suffering is a point he makes about all ethnic conflicts. His is the kind of courage on which peace in the Middle East will be built. It will not be built on denial of the facts regarding Edward Said or the rest of the Palestinian people.

AMMIEL ALCALAY,
professor

ESTHER COHEN,
labor organizer

ADEEB R. FADIL,
attorney

ZIVA FLAMHAFT,
educator and author

NADIA HIJAB,
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NICK KHOURY,
executive

SHERYL MILLER,
media producer

LEILA RICHARDS, MD

JEANINE SHAMA,
former banker

JILL STRAUSS,
activist

PETER WEISS,
attorney

*The Arab-Jewish Peace Group
New York City*

TO THE EDITOR:

Now that Justus Reid Weiner's assertions about Edward Said's life and origins have been found inaccurate, does COMMENTARY have any plans to issue a formal apology or clarification? And now that the "parable of 1948" seems to be factually borne out in Said's life, would Mr. Weiner consider extrapolating it to the entire Palestinian people?

I am referring to his last few paragraphs, where he makes a connection between Said's purported lie and "the myth-driven passions that have animated the revanchist program of so many Palestinian nationalists." If Said's lie would condemn the entire corpus of Palestinian nationalists, would the fact that it is not a lie persuade Mr. Weiner

that the passions of the Palestinians stem from genuine personal suffering?

RAZA MIR

*West Long Branch,
New Jersey*

TO THE EDITOR:

COMMENTARY should be ashamed of publishing Justus Reid Weiner's nasty, hypocritical, and morally corrupt piece on Edward Said. This is not scholarship, but sophistry of the basest sort and only contributes to the deceit that enshrouds Palestinian and Israeli disputes.

KEITH GALLAGHER

Watsonville, California

TO THE EDITOR:

It is clear that Justus Reid Weiner's intent in his cheap smear campaign against Edward Said is to make the details of one man's life the

central issue rather than the clearly documented history of forced emigration of Palestinians from what is now Israel. Mr. Weiner's attack is, in fact, very similar to the recent attack on Rigoberta Menchu in which her accusers focused on minor discrepancies in her biography to dismiss the very real history of the military's mass murder of indigenous peoples in Guatemala.

As a Jew and an intellectual, I cannot fathom how a Jewish publication could sponsor such an attack, which denies the history of an oppressed people systematically subject to exile, torture, murder, and the loss of civil rights. Such denials sound a little too familiar to Jewish ears.

KENNETH J. SALTMAN

*DePaul University
Chicago, Illinois*

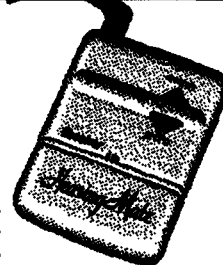
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TO THE EDITOR:

For the indoctrinated reader and the extremist believer, Justus Reid Weiner's article may seem to speak clearly and truthfully (which means that Mr. Weiner has mostly succeeded—bravo!), but to any rational-minded, clear-thinking person whose views are guided by a basic desire for peace and brotherhood, it is another heart-breaking example of propaganda and deceit.

STEPHEN BERGER
Venice, California

TO THE EDITOR:

I am sure that Justus Reid Weiner did his homework, as he maintains, but I am concerned about any claim we Jews have on the land of Israel that rests on the veracity of one or more of our opponents. Regardless of whether Edward Said is a man of honor or whether he has fabricated a past in order to legitimize his role as Palestinian spokesman, the Jews have to be able to make a legal and historic claim (not to mention a religious one) to the land.

DAVID A. HORTON
Columbia, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR:

Edward Said's oft-told tale of his Jerusalem boyhood, lost home, and agony of dispossession is now revealed by Justus Reid Weiner as a self-constructed myth of forced exile, to put it most charitably. Surely it was designed by Said to lend credence to his continuing recital of the heartless cruelties that Israel inflicted upon the Palestinian people by forcibly driving them from their homeland. Who, therefore, could ask for a more poetically just rebuke to Said than Mr. Weiner's discovery that it

was Martin Buber who was expelled from *his* Jerusalem home by the Said family, or that the Nasser revolution in Egypt, not the struggle for Jewish statehood, inflicted upon the Said family its most grievous deprivation of property?

What, if not guilt, was the source of Said's contrived identity? Here his newly published memoir, *Out of Place*, is quite instructive. His father, born in Jerusalem, left Palestine in 1911 for the United States, where he became an American citizen and lived for ten years, thereafter claiming that America was "his country." Returning to Jerusalem in 1920, he moved to Cairo in 1929. There he lived and there he conducted his business.

Although many members of Said's extended family lived in Palestine, his parents' identity was anything but Palestinian. Indeed, his father, we are told, "never much liked the place." With a luxurious home and lucrative business in Cairo, and with three-month vacations in Lebanon virtually every summer, it is hardly surprising that Jerusalem was a place for the Suids to visit during "off-and-on sojourns."

If his memoir clarifies anything, it is that young Edward and his parents, all born in Palestine but in no other discernible respect "Palestinian," lived prosperously as wandering Arabs, never at home anywhere, but invariably returning to their "native environments" in Cairo and Lebanon. Palestine hardly was, as Said still claims, the place "I grew up in."

Said has now lived in the United States, one more place that is not home, for nearly 50 years. It was here, burdened by "the unsettled sense of many identities"

and "the deeply disorganized state of my real history and origins," that he reinvented himself as a Palestinian. The rest is not only history, but, as Mr. Weiner convincingly demonstrates, duplicity.

JEROLD S. AUERBACH
*Wellesley College
Wellesley, Massachusetts*

TO THE EDITOR:

Justus Reid Weiner tells us that Edward Said invented a home in Jerusalem. I would like to suggest that this phenomenon may be more common among Palestinians than the one example given by Mr. Weiner. If my conjecture is correct, we may conclude that the Palestinians' yearning for the past, real or imagined, is so deep-seated emotionally as to make sense of Said's invention.

I have owned a house in West Jerusalem, in a neighborhood known as Neve Bezael, since the late 60's. One fall morning in the early 70's, I found an Arab man at my door. He was well-dressed, spoke English though with an accent, and was accompanied by two teenagers, who spoke good American English. The man, in his late 40's, said he would like to show his children the house he grew up in.

I was dumbfounded. My house is in a neighborhood that never had Arab homeowners or even lodgers. Before purchasing and restoring it, I had traced its ownership back to 1910, when it was built. There had been only one family there before me, and it was definitely Jewish.

At a loss, I invited the man and his two children to come in; he showed them the house, explaining the function of each room before, he said, he had been forced to leave.

Very strange! Most of the house did not exist in 1948. When I purchased the property, the original floor space was 500 square feet in all and now it is 1,800 square feet. Originally there were two rooms on one level and now there are seven rooms on two-and-a-half levels.

The man was polite and graceful, and his children listened in rapt attention to his "history." I was amazed at the detail in his descriptions of rooms that were not there in his time.

The experience was unsettling but now—in light of Said's similar invention—I find it easier to accept.

ROBERT WERMAN
*Hebrew University
Jerusalem, Israel*

TO THE EDITOR:

Let me add to Justus Reid Weiner's fine exposé. Edward Said has claimed (in an interview quoted by Mr. Weiner) that in 1947 his family was forced to flee its home in the Talbich section of Jerusalem by "a Jewish-forces sound truck warn[ing] Arabs to leave the neighborhood." I too lived in Talbich in 1947 and can report that this allegation is totally untrue.

At that time and throughout the entire year of 1948 I was an editor of the *Palestine Post* in Jerusalem. From September 1947 until May 1948, when my wife and I were compelled by constant Arab sniping and shelling to leave the neighborhood, we resided in a ground-floor apartment on what is now Hovevei Zion Street in the heart of Talbich.

Our landlord was a fine Arab physician named Dr. Jamal. He lived around the corner and was the first to visit me after I was hurt in the car-bombing of the *Post* on February 1, 1948. During

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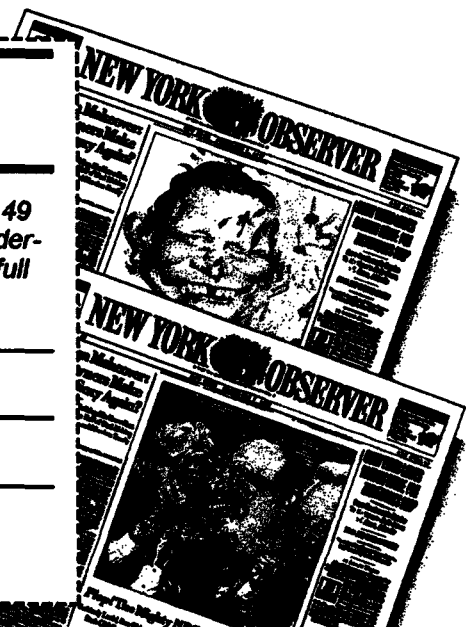
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the bitter winter of 1947-48, when our supplies were cut off by Arab forces who laid siege to the Jewish area of Jerusalem, he supplemented our meager food with fresh eggs and vegetables from Arab markets, and refused to take compensation.

One morning in April 1948, Dr. Jamal woke us to say that the Arab Higher Committee (AHC), led by the Husseinis, had warned Arab residents of Talbieh to leave immediately. The understanding was that the residents would be able to return as conquerors as soon as the Arab forces had thrown the Jews out. Dr. Jamal made the point repeatedly that he was leaving because of the AHC's threats, not because of the Jews, and that he and his frail wife had no alternative but to go.

At least until a month or so before the British left Palestine in May 1948, Talbieh was a tightly-controlled military zone. During that period, when I would return home in the early morning hours after putting the newspaper to bed, I had to show my entry permit and my U.S. passport to Arab guards serving the British. They were stationed at the corner of what are today Jabotinsky and Alkalai Streets. A barbed-wire fence ran the entire length of Jabotinsky Street, the east-west artery running through the neighborhood.

Under these circumstances, and particularly with British military and their Arab guards on hand, it would not have been possible for Jewish forces to rout the Arab population of Talbieh. Nor was it the policy of the Jewish leadership in Palestine to do so.

MARLIN MOSHE LEVIN
Jerusalem, Israel

TO THE EDITOR:

I was pleased to see in his marvelous article that Justus Reid Weiner mentioned the Jews driven out of their homes in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria in the 1947-48 war. Much—albeit not enough—has been written about the Jews in Arab countries who suffered murderous pogroms (for example, 600 Jews murdered in Baghdad in 1941) and other persecutions during World War II by Arabs sympathetic to and inspired by the Nazis. But the Jews dispossessed in Jerusalem in 1947-48, not only in the walled Old City but in other areas that came under Jordanian occupation, have gotten very little journalistic or academic coverage in recent years.

Consider the Shimon ha-Tzaddik quarter adjacent to the tomb of Simon the Just, not far north of Orient House and the American Colony Hotel. In December 1947, when Said claims his family was driven out of Talbieh, Arab armed gangs began violent harassment of the Jews in this area. They fired shots, set houses on fire, and attacked Jews physically. By early January 1948, the Jews had fled the neighborhood. To my knowledge, Shimon ha-Tzaddik was the first residential area in the whole country where the inhabitants were driven out in that war.

It should be kept in mind that Jews have been the majority in Jerusalem since 1870, that is, for 129 years. In the Old City, many Jews lived in the Muslim Quarter continuously from the 1800's up to the mid-1930's, in order to be close to the Temple Mount. Yet Arabs began driving Jews out of the Old City in 1920, with

the Nebi Musa pogrom and later violence in 1929, and in the Arab uprising of 1936 to 1938; in 1929, Jews were also driven out of certain neighborhoods outside the Old City in what is now called East Jerusalem. Jewish civilians were murdered in all these incidents, and the British authorities did not act to protect them.

I do not expect that Edward Said will bring the suffering of these hounded, dispossessed Jews to public attention.

ELLIOTT A. GREEN
Jerusalem, Israel

TO THE EDITOR:

In addition to the dishonesty documented by Justus Reid Weiner, we must consider a different sort of deception found in Edward Said's writings. In tone, Said's writing *sounds* reasonable and moderate, but in substance, he does not disagree with Hamas, the government of Iran, or other extremists who call for the death of Israel and, presumably, its people.

Just as there are sins of omission, there are lies of omission. Said's tone conceals the substance of his position.

GEORGE JOCHNOWITZ
*College of Staten Island,
CUNY
Staten Island, New York*

TO THE EDITOR:

The early reactions of my acquaintances in the peace-activist community to Justus Reid Weiner's article were ho-hum. To most, the fact that Said had led people astray about details of his childhood has not discredited his writings about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Some five years ago, however, I discovered that Said's writings about the history of the conflict were not neces-

sarily more forthright than those about his childhood. In the title chapter of his seminal work, *The Question of Palestine*, Said laid out the case that the Zionists, starting with Herzl, knew that their movement would be unacceptable to the native population. He claimed that the Zionists intended to evict the natives and steal their land, that they planned to destroy the then-current political order in order to build on its "ruins," and that they showed no regard for rights of non-Jews. As evidence, he cited a short passage from Herzl's diaries. But he carefully omitted the sentences preceding this passage, which suggest that Herzl expected Zionism to bring not ruin but "immediate benefits to the state that receives us." And he also omitted the sentence following, in which Herzl stated that the Zionist aim was to acquire land by purchase, not by theft, and the very next one that began, "It goes without saying that we shall respectfully tolerate persons of other faiths and protect their property. . . ."

IRA P. WEISS
Rockville, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR:

One could feel the false pathos and see inconsistencies in Said's books and articles over the years, but only the painstaking research of Justus Reid Weiner finally exposed him as a liar and a dishonest propagandist for the Palestinian cause.

I hope Israeli researchers will learn from Mr. Weiner how to examine documents more carefully, will stop rewriting Israeli history in an anti-Zionist spirit, and will start defending the achievements of the Jewish people.

F. BRAUER
Fair Lawn, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

In the 30 years or so that I have been a COMMENTARY reader, few articles have impressed me more than Justus Reid Weiner's exposure of Edward Said. It is good that Mr. Weiner, and COMMENTARY, have told the truth about Said's duplicity, and—who knows?—maybe some good will also come of it.

JOSEPH SHATTAN
Silver Spring, Maryland

JUSTUS REID WEINER
writes:

Since my article on Edward Said's fabrications of his childhood history was first published in COMMENTARY, and apart from a number of thoughtful accounts of it in the public prints, scores of angry references to it have appeared around the world, often in connection with reviews of Said's new memoir, *Out of Place*. In addition, perhaps a dozen short articles have been devoted to "rebutting" its findings. For the most part, these exercises have ignored or simply deprecated my exhaustively documented research demonstrating that, contrary to Said's long-retailed version of his early life, he did not grow up with his family in Jerusalem and was never dispossessed from there as a Palestinian refugee but rather spent his entire childhood and early youth in Cairo, with brief visits to his cousins in Jerusalem.

To this day my findings, and the issue of Said's untruthfulness, have yet to be seriously confronted, let alone weighed dispassionately, by his partisans. Instead, aspersions have been freely cast, often in the most vitriolic language, on my presumed motives in writing the article, my associa-

tions, my politics (again presumed), and my person. For one unschooled in this mode of intellectual discourse, it has been an eye-opening experience.

The assault has been led by Said himself, whose carefully manicured reputation for fastidiousness is amply belied by the relish he takes in mud-slinging, arguing from false or nonexistent premises, and rhetorical violence. Thus, in the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Abram* and in a succession of interviews with credulous or sympathetic reporters, the Parr professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia University has thought it a sufficient refutation of my research to note triumphantly that the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs (JCPA), with which I am affiliated, receives fund-

ing from Michael Milken's foundation: *ergo*, I am not only a "Zionist"—the basest insult in the professor's arsenal of invective—but a running dog of American finance capitalism. As it happens—though this is wholly immaterial to the truth or falsity of my findings—I receive no salary from the JCPA, and my research for the COMMENTARY article was entirely self-financed. As it also happens, Columbia University, where Edward Said has drawn a salary since 1963, is likewise among the beneficiaries of the Milken Family Foundation. What does that make *him*?

In any case, perhaps sensing that this particular foray into McCarthyism has been losing either its charm or its efficacy, Said has lately escalated his efforts at character

assassination by charging that my article, a work of scholarly investigation published in one of America's most respected intellectual magazines, was, in reality, the product of Israeli intelligence—the "Mossad"—which, he has intoned, "was probably behind it." When he leveled this bizarre accusation on National Public Radio, his obsequious interviewer, Scott Simon, saw no reason even to inquire as to his evidence. The Mossad? Why, of course!

Then there are Said's longtime personal friends Christopher Hitchens and Alexander Cockburn, both of whom have put in multiple appearances in print on his behalf, and the Israeli "human-rights activist" and "truth seeker," Israel Shahak, whose lavish testimonials to Said's probity and

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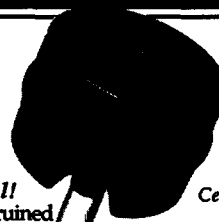
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love of peace are invoked by his defenders as if they were as irreproachable as the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval. To anyone familiar with these gentlemen, however, and the tainted political causes they have espoused, it must be a matter of curiosity that a world-famous professor of literature should have fallen among such low company.

In 1983, even the *Village Voice* found it could no longer give houseroom to Cockburn, at that time a regular columnist much-prized for his anti-American venom, after it was revealed that he had secretly taken a "grant" from the now-defunct Institute of Arab Studies—whose chairman of the board was one Edward Said—for a book slamming the Israeli inva-

sion of Lebanon. (The book never materialized.) As for Shahak, this fringe figure of vaguely Trotskyite sympathies, co-coiner of the term "Judeo-Nazi" to refer to Israel's occupation policy on the West Bank, is the author of a vicious diatribe, *Jewish History, Jewish Religion: The Weight of Three Thousand Years*. Leaping light years beyond mere anti-Zionism, the book ascribes present-day Israel's supposedly racist, totalitarian, and xenophobic makeup to Judaism itself. In one of those delicious ironies of politics by which extremes of Left and Right embrace, the French edition of this delicacy was brought out in 1996 by La Vieille Taupe, the "revisionist" publishing house most notorious for its ventures in Holocaust denial. Contrib-

uting a wildly fawning foreword to Shahak's nakedly anti-Semitic tract is none other than that self-described apostle of human reconciliation, the tweedy, contemplative professor of literature, Edward Said. Deep calling unto deep?

BUT ENOUGH: name-calling is a contagious disease. What is more regrettable is that the smears of Said and his cronies have been echoed, in what he likes to deride as the "Zionist-controlled media," by other writers and reviewers who have not troubled to arm themselves with the evidence before offering summary judgment of it. And they are echoed once again in many of the letters printed above.

Substantively, these at-

tacks and/or dismissals typically take one of three radically contradictory forms, and sometimes all three together. First, it is alleged that the facts I uncovered about Said's youth are, simply, untrue. Contrary to my article, it is claimed, Said *did* grow up in Jerusalem, *did* regularly attend St. George's school there, and *was* dispossessed along with his nuclear family in 1947, when they lost their villa and his father's prosperous business, thereafter arriving in Cairo as exiles. But since the evidence to support any such assertion has to be conjured more or less out of thin air, those mouthing it tend quickly to catch themselves and adopt a second, fallback position. This is that Said has never claimed that he *did not* grow up in Cairo;

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Company. As against this, his own failure to file a claim on "his" house at 10 Brenner Street, now valued at some \$1.8 million, speaks for itself: he has none.

Messrs. Hanania and Hoyt are not alone in attempting to vaporize my refutation of Said's claim of ownership by suggesting I am ignorant of the "cosmopolitan" concepts of property typical of Middle Eastern families like the Suids. As Said himself put it in *Al-Abram*, "Land Registry records [from Palestine] are rarely complete," and the house on Brenner Street "was in fact a family house in the Arab sense, which meant that our families were one in ownership."

Nice try, but legally impossible and practically ridiculous. After capturing Palestine from the Ottoman empire in World War I, the British enacted the Land Transfer Ordinance (1920), superseding the old Mulk Titles Law in force under the Turks. Foremost among its provisions was the requirement that written consent of the Land Registry office be obtained for every disposition of immovable property; entry into possession without such consent was punishable by a fine on both parties to the transfer. Moreover, both during the Ottoman period and the British Mandate, all land in private hands was subject to taxation, with ownership ascertained by reference to the records of the Land Registry. Those records, as I indicated my article, are not only complete with regard to the chain of title ownership for the house at 10 Brenner Street, they are unequivocal on the point of who owned it and who, by implication, did not.

Then there is the matter of Said's schooling. "He [Weiner] says that I didn't attend St. George's School" in Jerusalem, wrote Said in *Al-Abram*. "That is an outright lie." Both he and the mighty duo of Hitchens and Cockburn also accuse me of having failed to consult one of Said's classmates at the school, Haig Boyadjian, now living in the United States, who could vouch for his presence there. But who is lying here? I explicitly stipulated in COMMENTARY that the young Edward Said could well have been, "now and then, a temporary student at St. George's while on visits to his Jerusalem cousins." But I also demonstrated conclusively that he was never a regular student there and that, not surprisingly, there is no entry in the registry books of St. George's to attest to his ever having been enrolled in the school. This fact Said brazenly elided in the 1998 BBC television documentary, *In Search of Palestine*, in which he is filmed in the headmaster's office reminiscing about the school while examining those selfsame registry books! As for Boyadjian, I did in fact locate and interview him, and he did in fact recall his friend Said's having been at St. George's—but, significantly, he could not say for how long. All of this is documented in note 88 to my article, available on COMMENTARY's website.

But consider the absurdity of this entire ploy. Here we are arguing about whether Edward Said was schooled in Jerusalem, as in the old version of his life, when he himself has already radically revised that version in favor of the truer one presented in *Out of*

Place—where, among other things, we learn from his own lips that his schooling from 1941 to 1951 (i.e., from the age of six to sixteen) took place in three different institutions, each and every one of them located in Cairo, Egypt. Or are we now expected to believe that during these very same years, half of which saw much transportation mobilized for the British effort in World War II, the young Edward Said, duly enrolled at school in Cairo, was *simultaneously* commuting 250 miles back and forth across the Sinai desert to attend St. George's school in Jerusalem? Outright lies, indeed.

THIS BRINGS us to point number two: the contention, in the words of Messrs. Hanania and Hoyt, that Said has "never made conflicting claims regarding his family's residence in Jerusalem or denied that his family spent considerable time in Egypt." Well, if stating repeatedly and in so many words that "I was born in Jerusalem and spent most of my formative years there," or pointedly recollecting "my early days in Palestine, my youth, the first twelve or thirteen years of my life before I left Palestine," does not conflict with stating that he spent most of his formative years in Egypt, then we are dealing with a novel definition of conflict. Shall we just say instead that Edward Said is capable of asserting (and causing others to assert) both a thing and its opposite? Here, too, in any case, I have anticipated my critics, pointing out in my COMMENTARY article that, alongside the carefully cultivated impression that he had grown up and gone to

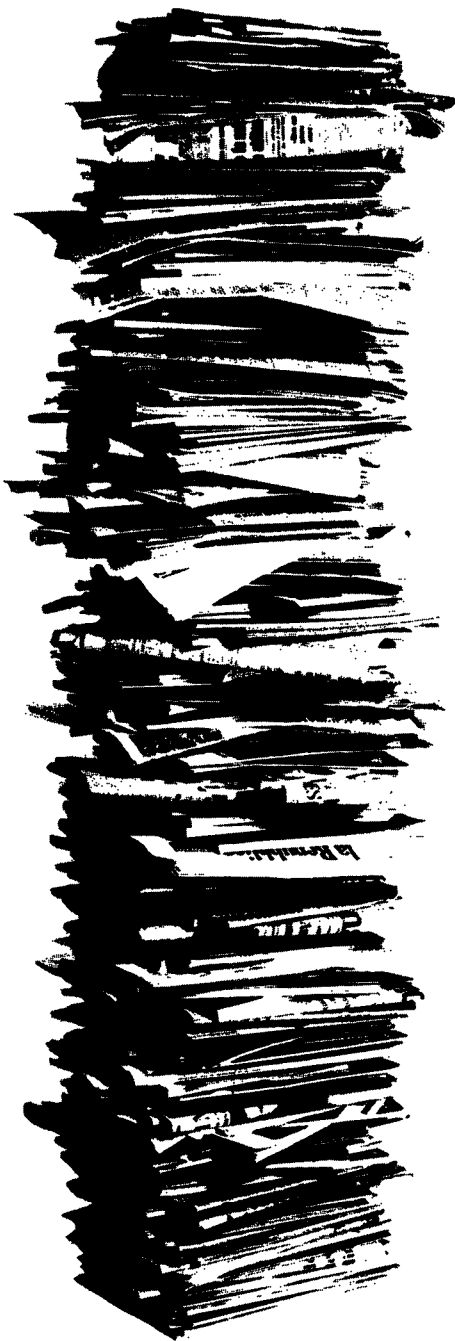
school in Jerusalem, only to be driven therefrom by the "Zionists" in 1947, "hints of the truth" about Said's early life had "also appeared in fugitive places over the years," even before the full-blown revisionism of *Out of Place*.

The utter obliteration from that book of any trace of the earlier version is, indeed, what may have caused some agnostic or uninformed reviewers (like the eminent literary scholar Frank Kermode in the *New York Observer*), who had neither followed Said's tergiversations as a memoirist nor known much about my article beyond the controversy it stirred, to express puzzlement over the dispute: for surely the book they had in hand makes no bones about a childhood in Cairo. But others, including some of Said's admirers, were not so easily snookered. One of them, Steven Howe, reviewing *Out of Place* for the (London) *Independent*, stated honestly that "The impression gained by most readers of Said's earlier autobiographical writings is that Jerusalem was his home until the age of twelve, when the family was forced to leave. Certainly this has been my perception—and I have read almost everything that Said has ever published."

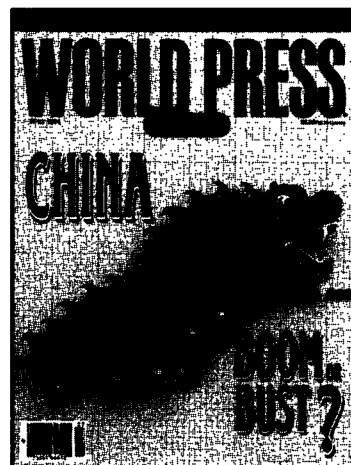
Just so.

What, then, accounts for the revised standard version now presented in *Out of Place*? Much sport has been had with my tentative speculation in COMMENTARY ("preposterous and insulting"—Edward Said) that "the 85 interviews conducted over the course of my own three-year investigation, including many with persons known to him,

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may have alerted [Said] to the urgency of retrieving from amnesia this amazingly full reconstruction of his Cairo childhood." In reply, Said has emitted a typical blizzard of mutually contradictory assertions: that, having signed a contract for the memoir in 1989, he was really stimulated to "write and complete" it in 1991 after being diagnosed with leukemia, and finished it in 1997 (*London Observer*); that the book "was begun in 1994" and finished "in September 1998" (*Al-Abram*).

Whichever the case may be, the gestation period of this book—either eight or six years by one account, four by the other—is hardly suggestive of haste in the face of a life-threatening disease. And if the book was indeed finished in 1997, or even as late as September 1998, why was publication dragged out for another year or two?

My speculation that Said had become aware of my research was not merely idle. Among the dozens of people interviewed for my article was his cousin Robert, who lives in Amman. Edward Said has lately accused me of having verbally threatened this cousin when he "refused to cooperate" with my research into Edward's past. That is a typical Said diversion—in fact, it was not I but my young Belgian research assistant Paul Lambert who visited Robert Said in his office on January 23, 1997, and it was Robert Said who did the abusing, yelling "you have been brainwashed" (Lambert is a Catholic) and "the Jews are the worst people in the world." But is it unlikely Robert Said neglected to inform his illustrious cousin of this occurrence?

At about the same time, I also made an attempt to contact Edward Said himself, in connection with an article I was then working on for the *Cornell International Law Journal* that included a review of his book flaying the Oslo peace process. Having already begun to discover discrepancies between his autobiographical claims and the historical evidence, I phoned his office and spoke to his longtime personal assistant, Zaineb Istrabadi, explaining that I was anxious to resolve the incongruities I had come across. Though I left my telephone number and e-mail address, Said never called me back.

Be all that as it may, there is, finally, reason to believe that as late as spring 1998, the memoir Said was working on was still centered in Jerusalem. According to the April 24, 1998 edition of the *Record*, an official weekly put out by the office of public affairs at Columbia, the book being written by the university's renowned professor of comparative literature, Edward Said, "chronicles his early years as the son of a wealthy Palestinian Christian businessman, his family's exile to Cairo after the founding of Israel," etc., etc. Somehow, then, between April 1998 and the time *Out of Place* was published in late September 1999, the first twelve years of Edward Said's life would seem to have undergone a rather thorough transmutation of geographical locale. How come? Revisions, anyone?

By the way, as of April 1998, the hard-to-improve-upon title the Parr professor was giving to his childhood memoirs was: *Not Quite Right*.

AND SO to point number three. The question raised by my article was really quite simple: was Edward Said telling the truth when, stepping forward as an—no, *the*—emblematic Palestinian exile, he represented himself as having spent his childhood in a particular "beautiful old house" in Jerusalem, only to "flee in panic" with his family in 1947 when a Haganah sound truck warned the Arabs to evacuate? The answer I arrived at was a thorough and resounding no. And this seemed to me most consequential: consequential, in the first place, for truth itself, which Said as an intellectual has professed to honor above all things ("to speak the truth, as plainly, directly, and as honestly as possible"); and consequential, in the second place, for any honest reckoning between Israelis and Palestinians, including in the area of claims for compensation for lost property, which happens to be a professional interest of mine and about which I have written at length ("The Palestinian Refugees' 'Right to Return' and the Peace Process," *Boston College International and Comparative Law Review*, Winter 1997).

I still hold such truth-telling to be of fundamental importance. But, as I began by noting above, evidently others do not. For many of Said's most vocal defenders, and even for Said himself, whether he has told the truth or lied would seem to be of no consequence at all. It is rather I who, by questioning him, have committed the heinous act of, as Kenneth J. Saltman writes here, "den[ying] the history of an oppressed people"—just as was done in the case of similar accusations about discrepancies in the ghost-

written autobiography of the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Rigoberta Menchu.

There is really little one can say in response to such attempts at silencing and moral blackmail. Shall I quote Edward Said once again on the intellectual's responsibility to truth? Or, perhaps, his quite sensible and inadvertently revealing comments on the Menchu controversy in an interview last March? ("The whole question of passing off something as a document of a life raises ethical questions which make me uneasy. There is a difference between saying 'I actually went through this' and saying 'I didn't actually go through it but I could have gone through it.'") Should I, perhaps, point out (as George Jochnowitz does above) that Said's actual position on Middle East "peace," reiterated most recently in the *Jerusalem Post* (November 30, 1999), calls not for mutual recognition but for the creation of a new unitary entity in historic Palestine? Meaning, in plain English, that Said, whose supposed contributions to peace are trotted out by his supporters as an amulet against any and all criticism, favors not a peace between Israel and a Palestinian entity, in whatever juridical framework, but a Middle East without a state of Israel?

None of this, I suspect, will satisfy Said's partisans or their fellow travelers. Let me close, then, by restating my conviction that the cause of peace between Israelis and Palestinians, to which so many of them assert their devotion, is not well-served but—to the contrary—traded by an attachment to historical lies. The fact is that the "best-known Pales-

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What are the facts?

Victimized by Arab Myths. Israel is the only country in the world whose legitimacy, whose "right to exist", has always been questioned. From its very beginning, from before its birth, Israel was surrounded by mortal enemies, single-mindedly obsessed with its destruction. The very day of its birth, in the truncated and minuscule territory assigned to it by the United Nations, six Arab armies invaded the newborn state.

In what was clearly a biblical miracle, the invading hordes were defeated by the ragtag Israeli army.

In 1967, the same aggressors launched another attack against Israel, from the north (Syria), from the south

(Egypt), and from the east (Jordan). The Six-Day War resulted in a complete rout of the Arabs, and a victory for Israeli arms that will be studied in war colleges for centuries to come.

Unable to vanquish Israel on the battlefield, the Arabs launched a propaganda war that has been very successful, and which the Jews (despite their reputation for being so "smart") have clearly and irretrievably lost.

Among the many myths propagated by the Arabs are that there is such a thing as a "Palestinian nation" (it's a concept that is not more than 40 years old); that the Israelis (Jews) are "occupiers" (if they were, who would be the sovereign that they displaced?); that Jerusalem is Islam's "third holiest city" (it's never once mentioned in the Koran, but hundreds of times in the Jewish Bible); the transformation of the age-old provinces of Judea/Samaria into the "West Bank"; the concept of "settlements" (with its connotation of illegality); and much more.

The Arab countries (and Iran) are frantically arming themselves with the most dreadful weapons of mass destruction. As the world knows, it is for one purpose only—their only political objective and their relentless obsession—namely the destruction of Israel. Two or three nuclear weapons would wipe Israel off the map once and for all. Retaliation by Israel, the destruction of major Arab cities, and millions of Arab casualties, would not deter the Muslim fanatics from pursuing their goal. For them, it would be a small price to pay. With Israel dismembered, with five or six Arab states poised to attack with weapons of mass destruction, with 40,000 Palestinian "police" armed to the teeth in Israel's midst, can anybody really doubt that a second Holocaust, even more terrible than the first one, is just about upon us? During the Nazi Holocaust, the whole world stood silently by and didn't lift a finger to prevent the most gruesome slaughter of innocents in the history of the world. In fact, many who were given the opportunity joyfully and enthusiastically participated in the bloodbath. By its pious insistence on "justice for the Palestinians" and pursuit of the "peace process", by fomenting and profiting from the buildup of weapons of mass destruction solely destined for the destruction of Israel, the world actively promotes this second Holocaust. Deep down inside, does the world really want the Jews to live or to disappear?

Israel — Utterly Vulnerable. These and other myths are what fuel the insistence of the Arabs, of most of the world, and, yes, also of the United States, that Israel allow itself to be dismembered and to turn part or even most of its tiny territory over to the "Palestinians." All concerned know well—and it has been acknowledged by our military leadership—that Israel would be utterly indefensible, at the mercy of its implacable enemies, if it were to divest itself of the Jordan

Valley, of the "West Bank", of the Gaza Strip, and of the Golan Heights. Why then does the world insist that Israel make itself so utterly vulnerable? Does anybody really believe that the "Palestinians", or any of the Arabs, would be appeased, that they would reconcile themselves to the existence

"By its pious insistence on 'justice for the Palestinians' and pursuit of the 'peace process', by fomenting and profiting from the buildup of weapons of mass destruction solely destined for the destruction of Israel, the world actively promotes this second Holocaust."

of a diminished Israel, even if Israel were to yield everything, turn the whole country over to the Arabs, except perhaps Tel Aviv and its suburbs? Everybody knows the answer. It would be an emphatic "NO", because the very existence of Israel, in whatever reduced territory, is an intolerable insult to the Muslim Arabs, for whom Israel must be rubbed out regardless of the sacrifices to be brought.

Why does the world focus on the spurious claims of the "Palestinians", an artificially created nationality that never in recorded history had an identity or country of their own? Why is there no clamor that the French and Spanish give an independent country to their Basque minorities? How about the Kurds, who are under the heavy thumbs of the Iranians, the Turks, the Iraqis, and the Syrians? How about the Tibetans, subjugated by the Chinese; and so many others? Nobody cares. Nobody wants to "liberate" them. It's only the Jews who are being asked to dismember their tiny country, less than half of the size of San Bernardino County in California.

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tinian intellectual in the world" (as he was recently described on the BBC) made wholesale political use of the supposed circumstances of his childhood, weaving an elaborate myth of paradise and expulsion from paradise out of one or two circumstances and a raft of inventions. That myth has been exposed, and its purveyor has been revealed not as a refugee from Palestine, but as a refugee from the truth. To judge by the way he and his supporters have responded, he, and they, are still on the run.

I want to thank most warmly those readers who have taken the trouble to write in praise of my article.

The Republicans

TO THE EDITOR:

Daniel Casse's "What the Republicans Have Forgotten" [October 1999] is essentially a hymn to Nelson Rockefeller. There is, of course, the obligatory bow to Ronald Reagan, a conservative, but clearly the proper sort—a big-government conservative.

Let me pose the following questions to Mr. Casse: Are the lives of most people really improved by the departments of Energy, Commerce, Education, and Transportation? Has increased social spending actually done more good than harm? Mr. Casse's obvious affirmation of these notions is of a piece with his parroting of the Democrats. For example, he writes that "the Republican-led Congress shut down the federal government," without any mention of presidential intransigence during the 1995 show-

down. He even cites the Clinton impeachment and the push for term limits as instances of the Republicans being "reflexively anti-government." But Mr. Casse's disdain for conservatism is rawest in the intimation that fanaticism inheres in being pro-life.

Perhaps Republicans dedicated to buying votes using the public treasury and acting indifferently toward perjury and abortion are the kind of Republicans most likely to succeed. Still, a dose of principle would be refreshing again, and perhaps even rewarding.

JOHN D. KING
Austin, Texas

TO THE EDITOR:

Republicans can be faulted for many things, but their refusal to support President Clinton's war against the former Yugoslavia blindly is not one of them, as Daniel Casse believes. Most Republicans were absolutely correct in not endorsing Clinton's undeclared *Wag-the-Dog* war launched concurrently with the Chinagate disclosures.

Mr. Casse even compares the Republicans who refused to endorse this massive attack on a small, friendly nation engaged in an internal struggle against Muslim separatists with the efforts of left-wing Democrats to stop President Bush's campaign against Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, which threatened Saudi Arabia and the oil of the Middle East.

He also accuses the Republicans of abandoning Ronald Reagan's policies of global involvement. Reagan, however, never would have involved the U.S. in a war against a country that was no threat to it or to any

other nation. He certainly would not have carried on a barbaric 78-day bombing campaign against defenseless civilians.

GEORGE RUBIN
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Daniel Casse mistakenly attributes a Senate subcommittee's recommendation to eliminate federal funding for the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) to a reduced commitment on the part of congressional Republicans to promoting democracy abroad. In fact, the subcommittee's action was taken because of a single member—its chairman—whose views on this issue are at odds with those of the overwhelming majority of Senate Republicans. Still, the subcommittee's action created a real crisis deriving from the tight budgetary situation and the difficulty of finding an account against which to offset the restoration of NED funding. In the end, the Endowment's appropriation was restored on the Senate floor by voice vote, following eloquent speeches by Richard Lugar (R-In.) and Tim Hutchinson (R-Ar.).

CARL GERSHMAN
*President, National
Endowment for Democracy
Washington, D.C.*

DANIEL CASSE writes:

John D. King's letter notwithstanding, nowhere in my article did I express enthusiasm for Nelson Rockefeller or suggest that pro-life Republicans are fanatics. But Mr. King is correct about one thing: I am skeptical of those Republicans who think that eliminating a few cabinet departments, establishing congressional term limits, and creating budget standoffs based on

short-term (and ultimately erroneous) budget projections can serve as a substitute for a conservative governing agenda. Though Ronald Reagan made efforts to scale back the size and scope of the federal government, he also had other priorities—cuts in marginal tax rates, a stronger military, and the promotion of American idealism. Over the last few years these ideas have become alien to many leading Republicans, just as they were to Nelson Rockefeller.

I share George Rubin's criticism of President Clinton's conduct of the war in Yugoslavia, but I suspect that had he still been in office, Ronald Reagan would have stood with Margaret Thatcher, who saw the battle against Slobodan Milosevic as a defense of Western interests against a destabilizing regional aggressor. In any case, he certainly never would have sympathized with the congressional Republicans who used the war in Yugoslavia as an opportunity for trying to direct our armed forces from the floor of the House of Representatives.

Finally, I thank Carl Gershman for pointing out that some Republicans did come to the rescue of the National Endowment for Democracy. But the fact that, a decade after Reagan left office, Republicans cannot unite around a program that clearly expresses his belief in spreading democracy reminds us how frayed the party has become.

World War I

TO THE EDITOR:

Thank you for Donald Kagan's powerful and valuable article on the causes of

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World War I and how it might have been prevented ["Lessons of the Great War," October 1999].

I would like to call attention to his quotation from the 1914 "September program" of Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, Germany's "moderate" chancellor, to make a point that was not part of Mr. Kagan's argument. Bethmann-Hollweg proposed that "France must be so weakened that it cannot rise up again as a great power," that Holland remain "ostensibly independent, but essentially subject to us," and that "mutual customs agreements" be established to "guarantee German economic domination of Europe."

The fact that Bethmann-Hollweg's ideas now sound somewhat archaic, if not quaint, is a reminder of how different the West is today. No current West European leader would contemplate such national objectives, and certainly not as prizes to be sought in war. Though it is conceivable that this is just a temporary fashion, goals like

those of Bethmann-Hollweg could not gain any serious consideration unless there was first a major change in the political character of the region, and there is no sign of that.

Peace in the West no longer depends on arms and allies—not because of world government, a change in human nature, or constant attention to the balance of power but primarily because of the democratic nature of the societies composing it. There is no reason to expect that most of the world will be unable to make the same passage.

MAX SINGER
Chevy Chase, Maryland

DONALD KAGAN writes:

I am grateful to Max Singer for his kind words, and I agree that no Western leader today would think and act as the German leaders did in 1914. I also believe that modern Western democracies are less likely to engage in aggressive wars than other regimes. I do not, however, share the rest of Mr. Singer's optimism.

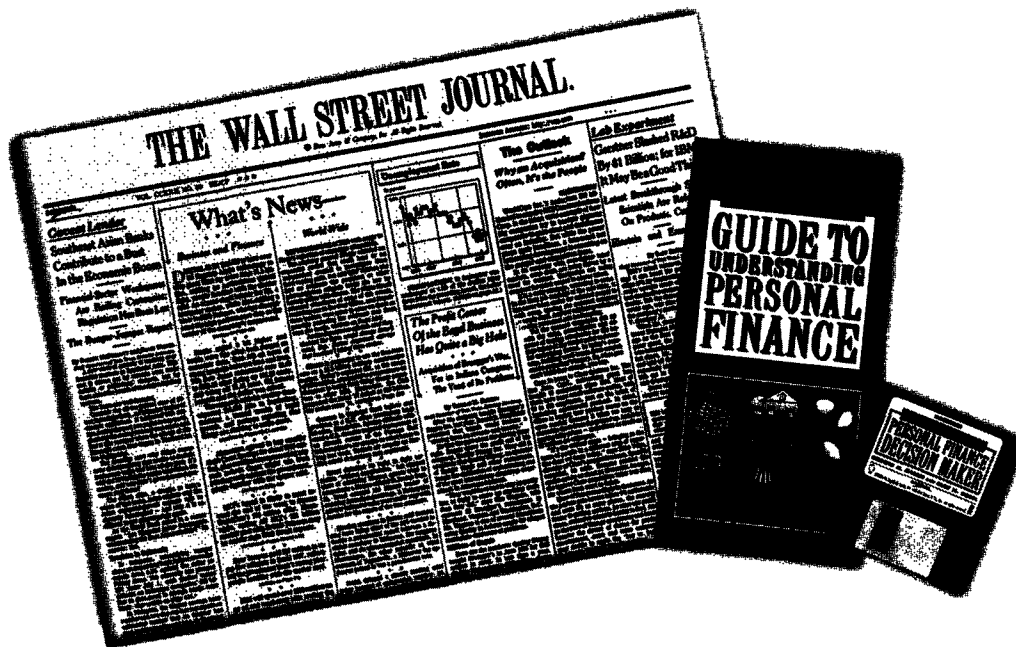
Western democracy continues to exist and flourish only because of the military predominance of the democracies that prevailed in two world wars and the cold war. If it is true that peace in the West has emerged from the nature of its democratic societies, it is no less true that the safety of those societies has rested and continues to depend "on arms and allies." As George F. Kennan once said, "You have no idea how much it contributes to the general politeness and pleasantness of diplomacy when you have a little quiet armed force in the background. . . . [Its existence] is probably the most important instrumentality of U.S. foreign policy."

The trend toward peaceful democracy made possible by this military power may turn out to be irreversible and permanent—but it may not. In the 1920's, the Weimar Republic and Japan seemed well on their way to becoming liberal democracies. Any threat from them seemed remote, even fanci-

ful. But the Great Depression put an end to the relatively democratic and liberal regimes in Germany and Japan, and war was not far behind. Because of the mainly uninterrupted prosperity enjoyed by the Western democracies since 1945, they have not been tested by hard times. Can we be sure that all the states that have recently adopted democracy or are struggling to achieve it would survive a severe economic setback and not turn to some more authoritarian and aggressive regime?

Even more worrisome is the fact that billions of people in the world now live under governments that are neither democratic nor satisfied with their place in the world. Is there anything beyond fond wishes to indicate that they will "make the same passage" to democracy and peace as the major Western states? It seems safer for those states that wish to preserve the peace to remain militarily strong and clearly willing to use that strength to deter or crush aggression.

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American Power—For What?

A Symposium

FOREIGN POLICY has once again become a matter of consequential dispute in American political life. But as Norman Podhoretz observed last month in *"Strange Bedfellows: A Guide to the New Foreign-Policy Debates,"* any number of well-known figures at different points on the political and ideological spectrum seem to have altered their accustomed views of the U.S. role in the world. His essay drew a taxonomy of these shifting attitudes over the last quarter-century and especially over the last few years, before articulating a position of its own (in a phrase, "post-Reagan Reaganism") with regard to the uses of American power in the period we have lately entered.

In an effort to broaden and extend this discussion, the editors solicited reactions to Mr. Podhoretz's analysis, mostly but not entirely from the diverse individuals whose positions he cited. Our invitation to them noted that, in addition to commenting on specific points raised by *"Strange Bedfellows,"* "we'd be especially grateful for a reasoned statement of your own 'take' on the current American role in the world and on the proper direction of American foreign policy now and in the years ahead."

The responses, 21 in all, appear below in alphabetical order.

This symposium is sponsored by the Edwin Morris Gale Memorial Fund.

Elliott Abrams

ANYONE INSTRUCTED in international relations during the last two centuries would know about the centrality of the balance of power. But the recent emergence of the United States as the dominant world power constitutes a radical change from that condition. The key question we now face is whether to preserve this dominance, or whether to view it as a danger to ourselves and others.

As a neoconservative and neo-Reaganite, labels Norman Podhoretz places on me and that I accept,

my own answer is obvious: preserving our dominance will not only advance our own national interests but will preserve peace and promote the cause of democracy and human rights. Since America's emergence as a world power roughly a century ago, we have made many errors, but we have been the greatest force for good among the nations of the earth. A diminution in American power or influence bodes ill for our country, our friends, and our principles.

What might threaten our leading role? I am less sanguine than Podhoretz may be and than Henry Kissinger clearly is about the People's Republic of

China. Just as during the cold war the problem was not Russia but Soviet Communism, in the PRC today the problem is rule by a Communist elite whose interests contradict those of its own people—and ours. As the strategist Coral Bell notes in the Fall 1999 issue of the *National Interest*, items at issue in the “possible collision course” between Washington and Beijing include the survival of Taiwan, the fate of North Korea, the U.S. alliance with Japan, the American naval and troop presence in East Asia, the prospect of a missile-defense umbrella over Japan and Taiwan, and PRC human-rights violations, not least in Tibet. With all these very much in mind, the PRC has increased its military spending by half during a decade when the rest of the world has used the post-cold-war calm to reduce defense expenditures. Chinese rulers are rushing to build a modern force that can dominate East Asia, and are supplying pariah states around the world with the latest missile and nuclear technology.

The Chinese regime, like all Communist regimes, is fundamentally insecure because it does not rest on popular support. Although it is trying to win a measure of legitimacy by improving living standards and allowing some additional personal autonomy, this will not work: as always with “goulash Communism,” whatever the local recipe, people will like the goulash but not the Communism. The recent crackdown on the apparently harmless Falun Gong movement and the continuing refusal to allow freedom of religion demonstrate how limited personal autonomy is likely to be and how extraordinarily insecure the government feels. As in the Soviet case, the regime will seek military power and success as a means of improving its legitimacy—and of cowing both its own people and its Asian neighbors.

In the Chinese case, however, there is a key difference Podhoretz does not mention: American business is pro-Chinese in a way in which it was never pro-Soviet. Too little money was at stake in Russia. By contrast, the corporate community has persuaded itself that, despite current setbacks, there are vast fortunes to be made even in a Communist China. Consequently, those promoting a tough line toward China’s human-rights violations and its aggressive foreign policy face resistance not only in Beijing but in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. As reaction to the recent agreement on Chinese membership in the World Trade Organization suggests, this is already causing divisions within the Republican party between the business community and all stripes of conservatives.

Pointedly acquitting Henry Kissinger of the

“scurrilous charge that his ideas about China have been shaped by the commercial interests some clients of his consulting firm have there,” Podhoretz also assures us that realists like Kissinger will advocate containment of the Chinese if the latter “show signs of developing imperial aspirations.” But what “signs” do we need, beyond the extraordinary buildup of conventional ground and naval forces as well as strategic nuclear forces, and China’s renewed threats to Taiwan? To say that this suggests no “imperial aspirations,” not even in Asia, is reminiscent of the line (properly dismissed by Kissinger and Podhoretz alike) that Soviet expansionism in Eastern Europe was “really” defensive and was motivated by fear of the West.

An issue to which few commentators other than Podhoretz have devoted adequate attention is changing notions of sovereignty. Commenting on Kosovo, he writes: “I find it hard to quarrel with the emerging idea that the principle of sovereignty should no longer embrace the right of political leaders to butcher their own people.” Coral Bell, too, points to the “new norms,” especially concerning human rights and the environment, that “legitimate great-power intervention in the crises of lesser powers to a degree seldom envisaged in previous diplomatic history,” and optimistically concludes that “Washington’s current and immediate future generations of diplomatic strategists have as large an opportunity (and as complete a set of tactical choices) before them as those of 1946–47.” But there are real dangers here in addition to opportunities. These “new norms” can be invoked to *challenge* American power as easily as to justify its use.

If, for instance, a single judge in Spain can force the seizure of General Pinochet in London against the wishes of both the Spanish and Chilean governments, what have we wrought? Can a system in which sovereignty may be breached not only by great powers but by any ambitious jurist really survive, and—a no less urgent question—can it be counted on to protect the rights of Americans? The new International Criminal Court, which treats sovereignty as a mere formality, presents similar difficulties. A long list of treaties now regulates matters once thought to be questions of domestic law.

Podhoretz likens our situation to that of 1919. I lean to Coral Bell’s comparison of the coming decade (or the next presidential term) to the fateful period of 1946–47. Whichever analogy one prefers, in this period, as Podhoretz notes, we will surely face painful decisions about when and where to intervene. But I come out as he does: better to face those

decisions than the far worse ones we will encounter if we let our position slip away. Whether the current generation of politicians and strategists is up to the task before them, we shall soon find out.

ELLIOTT ABRAMS, *who served as an Assistant Secretary of State under Ronald Reagan, is president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C.*

William F. Buckley, Jr.

MANIFESTLY, UNCLE NORMAN is having trouble outlining a paradigmatic foreign policy, and I do not blame him. He is very good at noting contradictions, anomalies, inconsistencies, and we have had many of them during the Clinton years. They have not, however, resulted in the crystallization of a foreign policy agreeable to—whom? Whom do we want to satisfy? God? Locke? The Founders? Americans with continuing fire in their compassionate bellies? Or maybe the old soldiers, who echo John Quincy Adams in urging Americans concerned for freedom abroad to wish its prospects well, while cultivating it with manual effort only in our own garden.

We know now more clearly than we did when *perestroika* took over in the Soviet Union and annulled Lenin that the mix that harnessed the energies and direction of so many of us during the cold war—traditional isolationists, traditional interventionists, traditional anti-militarists and their opposites—is gone and is not prospectively replaceable. When all is said and done, Podhoretz concludes that he would rather ally himself with an idealistic interventionism than with a prudent isolationism—a very insufficient term, for which I would substitute measured internationalism. But the difficulty he confronts in sorting things out and coming to this conclusion rests in part on his determination to face the comprehensive problems of foreign policy—what to do when, to whom, under what circumstances—*a priori*.

That is the intellectually challenging way of doing things, to seek out policy templates. As in, “When a nation threatens other nations, we will intervene.” Or even, “When a nation threatens its own people, we will intervene.” Or maybe even, “When a non-democratic nation can reasonably be assumed to be developing an ABC (atomic/biological/chemical) weapons capability, we will intervene.” How to intervene, at risk of how much sacrifice, is a subordi-

nate question, and of course subordinate questions generate sub-subordinate questions. Podhoretz balks at answering categorically any of these questions, leaving us only with his inclination in favor of an interventionist over a restrictive policy.

Well, coward that I am, I am going to proceed not *a priori*, but *a fortiori*: not by laying down constitutional formulations, but by asking one question. *What are we going to do about Taiwan?* In exploring that, perhaps light will be shed on structural questions as well.

About once every two years, beginning in 1962, I have counseled a foreign policy encouraging Taiwan to declare its independence of the Communist mainland. I knew how adamantly secession was opposed by Taiwan itself after my first visit there in 1962, and was still opposed, though with less than unanimity, when I was last there in 1992 on my fourth visit. Although it violates my rule against retrospective improvisation, I nevertheless observe that if we had succeeded in the 1960’s in persuading the Taiwanese to take progressive steps to detach themselves from Communist China—seminars, rallies, plebiscites, declarations of independence, applications to the United Nations—the gestation of a democratically governed independent state of twenty million people, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of their intentions and unfurling their own flag, would have considerably hampered Chinese irredentism.

But now there is the critical problem that the China of the new millennium will be making its claims with an arsenal of nuclear weapons and missiles and will be asserting jurisdictional sovereignty over an island that itself claims to be the legitimate government of China but that successive United States administrations, bowing to Beijing, have treated as a constituent part of China—whatever the peculiarities of a Chinese province that governs itself, has its own army and navy, and swears not to submit to the political authority of Beijing until there is a change there of counterrevolutionary dimensions.

At the same time, we are “pledged” to the qualified defense of Taiwan. It is fair then to ask what we will do if the day comes when Beijing issues an ultimatum—for instance, by demanding that Taipei must disband its military forces and receive a mainland delegation that will take effective control of the government. We all know that the object of statecraft is to abort crisis, and so far this has worked—Taiwan is self-governed and we are at peace with China. But what will we do when, confident of its resources and of its cause, Beijing looks us in the face and asks, Do

you want Taiwan so badly as to countenance a nuclear bomb on Honolulu?

Podhoretz might plead that, in such a hypothetical situation, we are simply back to a reenactment of Mutual Assured Destruction. But I want to hear it said: do we favor running the risk of nuclear war in order to preserve Taiwan's independence? My own answer would be yes, an answer given not in anticipation of the probable loss of Honolulu but in anticipation of a Chinese backing-down. But I solicit debate on this point, after which—arguing, as I say, *a fortiori*—I will be able to reason back to fundamental assertions concerning U.S. foreign policy.

Lacking a consensus, would we at that point start asking questions like: is Taiwan really vital to our strategic position? Or, what is a vital interest in a nuclear age? On the other hand, what about our tacit pledges to the continuing integrity of Taiwan? Did we not pass the Taiwan Relations Act in 1979, and have we not reaffirmed our commitment to ensure its *de-facto* independence? Are there other Taiwans here and there about the globe, little Kuwaits we are pledged to defend?

In a symposium like this one, we are, perhaps, castrated by the knowledge that things change. Governments change—ours, theirs—and language changes. The State Department in mid-November gave out the word that we would consider ending our blockade of the former Yugoslavia if there were free elections there, even if these renewed the mandate of Slobodan Milosevic. The same President who okayed this compromise told us a year ago that Milosevic was this day-and-time's equivalent of Hitler. So if Hitler is democratically reaffirmed, Hitler becomes okay? Or was "Hitler" just an inappropriate metaphor? Are there other inappropriate metaphors hanging around? Our commitment to Taiwan?

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY, JR., *editor-at-large* of National Review, is the author, most recently, of *Redhunter*, a novel based on the life of Senator Joseph McCarthy.

Eliot A. Cohen

THE COLD-WAR foreign-policy debate offered its consolations, not least of which were those of comradeship. Conservatives of all stripes could band together in the knowledge that the foreign enemy really did represent a streak of evil in human nature; domestic opponents seemed, and

often were, naive or worse. True, by the late 1980's, splits had begun to appear in the conservative camp, as some began to realize that the Soviet Union was, in fact, in very sad shape indeed; but by and large, we were all in it together.

No longer, as Norman Podhoretz's essay makes clear. But although I sympathize with his attempt to distinguish schools of thought—isolationist/realists versus new-American/imperialists—I have doubts about the enterprise. Would the "realist" Charles Krauthammers of this world watch Taiwan be bullied into submission without wanting American power to have a say? I doubt it. Would the "interventionist" William Kristols of this world endorse the dispatch of American troops to keep the peace in the now-independent former Soviet republic of Georgia? I doubt that, too. There are, to be sure, tendencies, sensibilities, and predilections at play, but these do not amount to doctrines. Nor should they.

The international environment in which the United States operates does not lend itself to programmatic statements. Take the case of China, which does loom as a foreign-policy problem for the U.S. It is not the evil empire of the cold-war past, but rather a complex, turbulent society burdened with a corrupt and ideologically bankrupt regime that is, nonetheless, tolerating (or unable to resist) the gradual spread of some political as well as economic freedoms. There is nationalism and paranoia—and a tremendous desire to attend Western colleges and universities and to take advantage of the fruits of the West's economic system. Some nuanced mixture of confrontation and engagement is surely the right policy, and sweeping concepts will not tell us what that mix is.

Or take Kosovo, where, on balance, military intervention stopped some truly dreadful events in their course, although it did not (and could not) bring about the multiethnic, autonomous-but-not-independent Balkan Switzerland sought by the Clinton administration. The critical judgments required in that case were prudential: what price would the United States pay for intervening, and what for refraining? The Clinton administration got it right, and its opponents, on the whole, got it wrong, but theoretical rigor had nothing to do with it.

The world is a far more complicated place today than it was during the cold war. The creative destruction of information-driven capitalism; the deeper forces of demography and Americanization; the undeniable (if not altogether desirable) increase in the power of international media and non- or supra-state actors; the working-out of the long-term consequences of the collapse of old empires;

the impossible-to-anticipate shocks of disease and ecological disaster—all have created a messy world that doctrines do not fit. There are, of course, a few first principles. No one (probably not even some members of the Chinese Politburo) would like to see the United States lose its status in the international system as the fundamental guarantor of an open trading order. By and large, democracy is better than dictatorship, not only in terms of fundamental decency and civil rights but as a source of peaceful relations among states. For the application of these and a few principles like them, however, no hard and fast rules can be found.

Prudence, then, should be the unsatisfactory and platitudinous watchword of American foreign policy. Podhoretz's anxiety about American isolation, which he shares with so many commentators on American foreign affairs, is excessive. America has been engaged with the outside world since the founding of colonies more than three and a half centuries ago. No President for the last 50 years, and no serious presidential candidate now or in prospect, has advocated anything like isolationism. None has proposed that this country be anything other than the world's dominant military power, or that it simply disregard the political problems of distant regions like the Persian Gulf or East Asia. There is a great deal more healthy good sense out there than one might think, and although one side may run foreign policy more or less competently than the other, even an administration as prone to pratfalls and as anti-realistic (in the foreign-policy sense) as the current one has done not too badly, all things considered. Saddam Hussein is still under constraint; our alliances are intact; China has been deterred from muscling Taiwan too much; Russia, if disgruntled, is not actively hostile.

The poisonous legacy of foreign-policy partisanship left by the cold war obscures the fundamental consensus that is a tremendous source of national strength. A season of presidential campaigns will probably heighten artificial distinctions between the parties, as well as highlighting the real ones that do exist. But sober sense would suggest that Americans acknowledge their good fortune in being able to agree about many things.

This consensus will prove necessary, because considerable foreign-policy problems loom ahead. The rise of China will require a sophisticated blend of measures to shape, accommodate, and in some cases contain the emergence of this new power with no previous experience of operating as an equal in the international system. The collapse of states as different as Colombia and Pakistan—and

others may follow—will pose severe challenges to neighbors and ultimately to the United States. The diffusion of weapons of mass destruction is real, and with it the possibility of ghastly attacks on civilian populations. The tight linkage of financial markets through the new information economy may produce unanticipated economic calamities, while the disparities between rich and poor states may only grow.

All of these, however, are large problems to be managed and handled; pragmatic skill, not ideological clarity, is what the times call for.

ELIOT A. COHEN is professor of strategic studies at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University.

Francis Fukuyama

IN HIS usual incisive way, Norman Podhoretz has dissected the strange permutations and combinations of attitudes toward foreign policy that have arisen in the decade since the fall of the Berlin Wall. There are, however, three gaps in the story that need to be filled in.

The first has to do with isolationism on the Right, which Podhoretz tends to underplay. He is, of course, quite correct to denounce the Clinton administration's shortsighted partisanship in attacking "Republican isolationism" in the wake of the Senate's failure to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. And it would be convenient if right-wing isolationism began and ended with Patrick J. Buchanan. But Buchanan is not a major force in American politics, while the Republicans in Congress are; and there lies a problem.

Many in this group are not, like Buchanan, isolationist out of principle. Rather, they are driven to the same position simply by catering to their constituents. It is a Republican-majority Congress that has been complicit in underfunding the military, with budget hawks like John Kasich leading the charge. This is the group that routinely gets applause lines by attacking foreign aid (the lion's share of which continues to support Israel and Egypt and the peace process). Their small-mindedness is similarly on display in repeated efforts to cut the National Endowment for Democracy's minuscule funding. During the Kosovo conflict, the House Republicans voted, just as congressional Democrats had done in the early 1970's, to cut off funds for

U.S. forces already deployed in the field. Although there was a time when Republicans could be counted on to support free trade against Democratic opposition, today, in spite of record low levels of unemployment and high levels of U.S. competitiveness, their enthusiasm has eroded substantially.

How serious right-wing isolationism is remains to be seen. Many congressional Republicans have been driven crazy by President Clinton and, in the wake of the impeachment scandal, will simply oppose anything he supports. Since this is an opportunistic rather than a principled isolationism, it may be that a Republican President in 2000 could lead them out of their morass. Or it may be that Republican internationalists are actually much more alone in their own party than they realize.

The second gap in the argument is related to the first. The relative value of realism (in its various versions) as opposed to what Podhoretz labels the "neo-Reaganite" foreign policy espoused by the *Weekly Standard* has to be assessed not just in terms of the intrinsic merits of each position but also by the extent to which one or the other can serve as the basis for a conservative internationalism, and thus as a means of guiding conservatives back from the isolationist abyss.

Podhoretz quotes William Kristol and Robert Kagan to the effect that "Without a broad, sustaining foreign-policy vision, the American people will be inclined to withdraw from the world and will lose sight of their abiding interest in vigorous world leadership." Well, maybe. There is a fundamental ambiguity at the core of the *Weekly Standard* position concerning the exact mix of "interests and ideals" that should define American foreign policy. Podhoretz is right that the neoconservative position is more hard-headed than that of (say) Anthony Lewis, insofar as it recognizes the importance of American credibility and prestige. But the ends this policy serves are expansive ones that often amount to support for "humanitarian intervention."

In such circumstances, the need to defend U.S. credibility becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy: if you intervene in areas not vital to your strategic interests, your credibility will indeed be tested. Had the U.S. not threatened to bomb Kosovo in support of the Rambouillet accords (something the realist Henry Kissinger opposed at the time), NATO would never have faced the severe credibility crisis that ensued, from which it emerged by the skin of its teeth.

It is fine to be nostalgic for Reaganism, but Reagan (like Churchill before him) was rhetorically successful because he actually faced an evil empire against which he could rouse a sleeping public. It is

not clear that the American public can be similarly roused in situations that amount to humanitarian intervention, disguised as it may be by a thin coating of national interest. More than the different varieties of realism, a policy that cannot clearly define where we should *not* intervene risks being seriously out of touch with the American public.

A final gap in Podhoretz's account is his silence on the subject of globalization. Twenty-five years ago, when I was studying international politics in graduate school, high politics revolved around nuclear alerts and Henry Kissinger's shuttlings to the Middle East. Today, high politics is IMF Director Michel Camdessus jetting off to Seoul or Jakarta to arrange a bailout. Save for Buchanan and Edward N. Luttwak (both of whom seem to have gone off the rails when it comes to economics), none of the figures mentioned in Podhoretz's article has tried to come to terms with the global economy or has anything particularly interesting to say about it.

True, the old world of power politics does rear its head occasionally, in peripheral areas like the Balkans or Transcaucasia; and it may come roaring back in a big way among the great powers at some point in the future. But in the meantime, the major issues in global affairs will concern exchange-rate stability, wage inequality, the World Trade Organization, institution-building in transitional economies, the impact of information technology, capital controls, and a host of other difficult policy issues. Today, internationalism and engagement are more properly matters of how the U.S. and the international financial institutions can help Russia or China or Ukraine build free markets and democracy, rather than the conditions under which the U.S. will or will not use military force.

FRANCIS FUKUYAMA is Hirst professor of public policy at George Mason University and the author, most recently, of *The Great Disruption*.

Frank J. Gaffney, Jr.

THE OLD LINE, "You can't tell the players without a scorecard," never seemed more apt than at present, in what might be called the post-post-cold-war environment, with its bewildering array of specialists, pundits, and practitioners. Norman Podhoretz has performed a singularly useful service in providing such an annotated scorecard, and it is delicious that, in the process, he has settled a few scores as well.

I have few serious disagreements with the way Podhoretz has parsed the various schools of thought and explicated the often torturous paths by which some have arrived at their present stances and intellectual alliances. His most helpful contribution, however, may be the attention he has focused on the two camps that have deviated the least from their principles—those determined to leave no stone unturned in the cause of constraining American military power, and those who believe that American power is indispensable not only to protecting our interests but to promoting a relatively peaceable world.

To be sure, as Podhoretz recounts, some prominent adherents of the first school—variously described as unilateral disarmers, aggressive multilateralists, and utopian One Worlders—have prominently backed U.S. participation in controversial military operations from Haiti to Kosovo. These include Bill Clinton, Madeleine Albright, and Samuel Berger. I would argue, however, that in such advocacy they have actually deviated less from their policy roots than might appear at first glance.

In fact, the diversion of America's might and its dissipation in the service of "selfless" international causes have been hardy perennials of the self-described "global-security" camp. In the past, this predilection has taken the form of support for a standing UN army, to which the assets and personnel of our armed forces would be permanently assigned or subordinated. The hallmark here is the proposition that only military operations authorized by the Security Council are "legitimate." Although Albright and Berger have on occasion found themselves sharply attacked by others who share their objectives (famously at Ohio State University when the Secretary of State and National Security Adviser, together with Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen, tried haplessly to sell Clinton's war option for Iraq to jeering antiwar activists), their agenda *in toto* is largely indistinguishable from that of their sometime critics on the Left.

This reality can be seen most clearly in the microcosm of arms control, where no perceptible difference separates the Clinton administration's stated ambitions for ridding the world of weapons of mass destruction through negotiated agreements from the position of more radical activists. The Senate's courageous rejection of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty—no product of partisanship, let alone isolationism—offered proof positive of how far removed Clinton and Gore are from sensible and responsible thinking about nuclear deterrence and its requirements, and how squarely they fit into the

traditions of the ban-the-bomb and nuclear-freeze movements.

I am proud to be placed by Norman Podhoretz in the second of the two policy schools that have remained true to their principles—the so-called "neo-Reaganite" camp. While, as he notes, there are some differences within this group, they mostly center on how to apply those shared principles in specific cases, rather than on the principles themselves.

Fundamentally, we agree that the main threat arises not from the United States' being too powerful but from its being perceived abroad as weak and irresolute. That perception, alas, is generally the result of our acting that way at home—a phenomenon all too much in evidence during the Clinton years. It is no coincidence that during this period we have witnessed serious erosion in America's alliances, escalating proliferation, an ominous "strategic partnership" being forged between the Russians and Chinese, and the growing power of rogue states and terrorist organizations. These are tectonic shifts in the geopolitical plate structure with which we will have to contend for years to come.

Given history's harsh treatment of the "disarm-the-one-you're-with" school, and its general vindication of the school of peace-through-strength, it is remarkable indeed that there is still something to debate. And yet, the former camp is not only still a factor in policy deliberations; it is having a disproportionate influence over them. This is due in part to the fact that many in the senior ranks of the Clinton administration are among its adherents. But it is also a byproduct of an effort that has not received the critical attention it warrants: in an increasingly coordinated manner, left-of-center philanthropies are investing more than \$140 million per year in the work of academic and activist proponents of an agenda variously called "Human Security," "Global Security," "Cooperative Security," "One World," and "Secure World."

Thanks in particular to the sustained generosity of the MacArthur, Ford, W. Alton Jones, Ploughshares, Hewlett, Carnegie, Merck, and Rockefeller foundations, thousands of professors and graduate students have been trained to advance revisionist views of the Reagan legacy, to argue the illegitimacy of American power, and to promote the necessity of global governance. Dozens of think tanks and organizations—some of whose more radical views were in evidence last month during the demonstrations in Seattle against the World Trade Organization—have been underwritten to espouse and legitimate these ideas, and efforts are being ex-

pendent to cultivate sympathetic treatment in the media. Absent a comparable effort in behalf of more realistic and robust security policies, those who remain committed to what Jeane J. Kirkpatrick once rightly ridiculed as a "blame-America-first" philosophy may exploit the confusion and incoherence of the contemporary debate to dictate its outcome.

Already, the Clinton-Gore administration is far along in its efforts to institutionalize multilateral arrangements that threaten sharply to limit American sovereignty and freedom of action. Its phony arms-control agreements and generally vapid "peace processes," its hollowing-out of the U.S. military, and its coddling of adversaries at the expense of America's allies portend a legacy frighteningly reminiscent of the prewar period of the 1930's. Norman Podhoretz is to be commended for warning of this danger, and for pointing the way if we are to avoid a calamity that might, if anything, exceed that which followed an earlier heyday of pacifism and utopianism.

FRANK J. GAFFNEY, JR., *who held senior positions in the Reagan Defense Department, is currently the president of the Center for Security Policy in Washington, D.C.*

Owen Harries

NORMAN PODHORETZ's essay is mainly about discontinuity: how, over the last decade, positions have altered and alignments shifted, and how strange and unpredictable the ideological landscape has become.

As usual, Podhoretz gets to the heart of the matter, even if he does so in slightly loaded terms. For the current divisions among conservatives about foreign policy are essentially between those who believe that the policies and habits of mind that characterized the cold war are still valid and appropriate, and those who do not. This division cannot be usefully discussed in terms of "steadfastness" and "abandonment," as if what is involved is some test of character. What the argument should be about is not consistency but appropriateness—the appropriateness of old policies and assumptions in radically changed circumstances.

For over 40 years, we anti-Communist cold warriors insisted that the United States, and indeed Western civilization, faced a life-threatening crisis. Our adversary was powerful, ruthless, and bent on

our destruction. His values were inimical to ours. The struggle was global.

In these very special circumstances, and as a matter of survival, we insisted that foreign and defense policies should be given overriding priority, that an extraordinary level of global commitment and activity was justified. The exceptional nature of the times required exceptional measures.

Then, abruptly, the cold war ended. This left the United States victorious, supreme, and about as unthreatened as a great power can be in a system of independent states. In these entirely changed circumstances, it seemed to me that a fundamental reassessment of American foreign policy was not only desirable but essential—certainly in terms of the country's needs, but also in terms of our moral and intellectual integrity as cold warriors. For if the existence of the cold war had been so special, requiring a profound reevaluation of our role in the world, then the same was surely true of the *ending* of the cold war. To turn around now and treat as normal and permanent policies that had been adopted and justified because of an existential crisis seemed fraudulent.

Those who now argue for continuation of cold-war levels of activism and commitments usually invoke one or more of three grounds. First, they maintain that while there is no longer one great threat facing us, there are a number of smaller ones and that these are collectively as dangerous as the threat posed by Communism a generation ago. This, I believe, is nonsense, and its nonsensical character is exposed by the pathetic efforts to inflate the significance of petty tyrants by representing them as "Hitlers" or "Stalins." Moreover, the arithmetic of this kind of aggregation is specious: a bad head cold plus a skin rash plus a slipped disk does not add up to a brain tumor.

Second, it is argued that as the world is intrinsically an incredibly dangerous place (for this purpose, anti-realists suddenly adopt the most extreme form of Hobbesian realism), the United States must involve itself everywhere and always, in every issue large and small, because, to quote Robert Kagan, otherwise "[t]here is no certainty that we can correctly distinguish between high-stake issues and small-stake issues in time to sound the alarm." Thus a policy of relentless, universal, and perpetual busyness is advocated because of a complete lack of faith in the ability of the American government and people to exercise any judgment, foresight, or discrimination.

Third, there is the argument advanced by Podhoretz at the end of his article—that "we are in a

situation resembling the one that developed after the end of World War I," when the withdrawal of the United States helped create a power vacuum in which totalitarian systems were able to thrive. Such a mistake, it is insisted, must not be made again. As an argument against isolationism of the kind that prevailed in the United States between the wars, this is irrefutable. As an argument against a policy of discrimination and prudence that advocates stopping short of democratic crusades and hyperactive hegemonism, it is irrelevant. Indeed, the amount of attention Podhoretz devotes to isolationism strikes me as extravagant. Isolationism is surely a red herring, for no serious participant in the conservative foreign-policy debate advocates it. The real arguments take place in that broad territory that lies between the extremes of gung-ho crusading and isolationism.

In the case of NATO, for example, what is at issue is not the alliance's continued existence, or U.S. membership in it, but its rapid and extensive expansion. Looking back at the 1970's, Podhoretz makes the point that he disagreed with the Kissingerian policy of working with China to counter Russia because it confused the central issue: that the enemy was not Russia but Communism. Indeed, as he reminds us, far from Russians as a nation being the enemy, they were the first *victims* of Communism. That is certainly the way I saw things, and that is one principal reason why I now oppose the expansion of NATO eastward, at a time when Russia is struggling, however imperfectly, to find its feet as a democracy. But why, in terms of his own distinction between Communism (enemy) and Russians (victims), does Podhoretz support that expansion?

The reasons I urge restraint and prudence on the United States have nothing to do with isolationism. They are threefold. First, I have serious doubts concerning the willingness of the American people to sustain the level of engagement now being advocated vigorously by some of my conservative colleagues.

Second, I believe that, in any case, many of the goals being urged upon us to justify the extravagant commitment of resources and prestige are not sensible or sustainable ones. I am not an admirer of humanitarian wars; policies that result in semi-permanent American garrisons in the Balkans strike me as ill-considered; and a country that has signalingly failed to establish democracy in Haiti, after years of trying, should surely consider a more modest approach to democratic crusading.

Third, and most compelling, I advocate restraint because every dominant power in the last four cen-

turies that has not practiced it—that has been excessively intrusive and demanding—has ultimately been confronted by a hostile coalition of other powers. Americans may believe that their country, being exceptional, need have no worries in this respect. I do not agree. It is not what Americans think of the United States but what others think of it that will decide the matter.

OWEN HARRIES is the editor of the *National Interest*.

Jacob Heilbrunn

IMAGINE A wealthy businessman who has been fending off his main competitor for several decades. He has endured family feuds as well as industrial espionage, all the while managing to create a thriving enterprise. Suddenly his rival is revealed to have completely bungled his own affairs and is forced to plead bankruptcy. Overnight, our businessman goes from being merely wealthy to being a Croesus, able to buy, hire, and fire at will. But how do the business journals and the professors of management advise him to behave? You've never been in greater peril, they caution: sell off your assets, lest you provoke a coalition against you; better to run the risk of penury than to overextend yourself.

Does this sound ludicrous? It is essentially what newly revived isolationists have been counseling ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union. To be fair, the *Nation* has been sounding a similar dogma since Vietnam, but now elements on the Right have adopted it as well. In fact, the single most important development in the post-cold-war era may be the alacrity with which some leading conservatives have embraced a leftist set of beliefs that had seemed to sputter into insignificance with the disappearance of the Soviet Union. From Trent Lott declaring it was time to give peace a chance in Kosovo, to Charles Krauthammer sounding a Walter Lippmann-like warning about our commitments being out of balance with our means, to the crackpot fringes of Buchananism, isolationism, often in the gilded form of "realism," has made a comeback.

In his penetrating essay, Norman Podhoretz provides the historical context that has been missing in most discussions of where American foreign policy is headed. One of his most important points

is that the activist party in the 20th century has been not the GOP but the Democrats. The cold war, which really began not in 1945 but with the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917, was finally countered by the Truman administration, even as Robert Taft & Co. on the Right, echoing Henry Wallace on the Left, called for the U.S. to stay out of Europe. Did some of the Republican zeal for prosecuting the cold war in the 1950's derive from a realization that the GOP had been tardy in its response to the Communist threat, and that now it either had to outflank the Democrats or relegate itself to the sidelines?

As Podhoretz observes, Democratic ardor for confronting Communism did not begin to wane until Vietnam, when academics, journalists, and politicians seemed to perform ideological somersaults. But perhaps Vietnam was the aberration, albeit one with a profound effect on American elites, and perhaps the demise of the Soviet Union, coupled with Yugoslav ethnic cleansing, has jolted mainstream Democrats back to reality. Maybe the Republicans, as William Kristol and Robert Kagan have argued, are in danger of forfeiting their dominance in foreign policy, while the Democrats charge ahead, unafraid to challenge dictators and stand up for human rights.

Not exactly. True, the record of the Clinton administration in exercising American power abroad has not been unimpressive on its face. As Podhoretz notes, Clinton stared down the Haitian junta, sent destroyers off the Taiwanese coast, bombed in Afghanistan and Sudan, carried out an air war against the Serbs in Kosovo, and continues to conduct attacks against Iraq. To critics like Charles Krauthammer, this represents not only dangerous overstretch but most of all a quixotic commitment to justice and human rights. Yet if this is what it takes to get Democrats to act, then I am all for it.

The truth is that the realists vastly overblow the potential perils to the U.S. of intervention abroad. The American public does not. As a study carried out by the Triangle Institute and excerpted in the *Washington Post* reveals, the American public can distinguish between suffering casualties and suffering defeat, and what most Americans are interested in is victory. Still, the timorousness with which the Clinton administration has approached its foreign ventures, backing into rather than decisively entering them, does not inspire much confidence that any future Democratic administration will take a tougher stance toward dictators around the globe, particularly in China.

But neither would a George W. Bush-led ad-

ministration be much different. Indeed, given the coloration of Bush's present foreign-policy advisers, it might be even more cautious than a Democratic one. (Though it is often claimed that academia has no influence on the real world, academic models of realism have in fact had a profound effect on American foreign policy, whether we are speaking of Henry Kissinger's conception of détente and triangular diplomacy or the desire of the elder Bush's administration to preserve a supposed balance of power in the Middle East by leaving Saddam Hussein in the saddle.) The only consolation offered by the prospect of a second Bush administration is that it would at least not succumb to outright isolationism.

If, however, Bush (or John McCain, should he become the Republican nominee) were to lose the election, then I fear isolationism might well take hold in the GOP. And here is where Podhoretz may have pulled his punches. Despite Bill Clinton's manifold imperfections, which hardly need to be enumerated, he of all people is closer to Podhoretz's robust conception of American foreign policy than is much of today's GOP. The virulence with which the Kosovo war was greeted among people like Jack Kemp amounted in my view to downright anti-Americanism. At a time when the United States has never been more flush economically, the claim of the realists that we are about to overextend ourselves is as fanciful as comparable warnings sounded by liberal doves in the 1980's.

The new realists have it backward. America is not overcommitted. It is not committed enough.

JACOB HEILBRUNN *writes regularly for the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and Foreign Affairs.*

Robert Kagan

EARLY IN his outstanding essay, Norman Podhoretz expresses some amazement at the "unprecedented" reversals of the foreign-policy views expressed by both Left and Right over the past decade. Actually, such reversals are part of a long and honorable American tradition.

In the first two decades of the American republic, Jeffersonian Republicans and Hamiltonian Federalists altered their positions on foreign and defense policy rather dramatically, depending on

which side was in power. (Jefferson, for instance, wanted to build a strong navy in the 1780's, only to oppose a naval buildup when the Federalists held the White House in the 1790's; Federalists returned the favor by opposing the Louisiana Purchase, thus reversing their own previously held position.) In the early part of this century, erstwhile Republican internationalists like Henry Cabot Lodge delivered their party to isolationists like William Borah in a fit of (perhaps justifiable) pique at Woodrow Wilson, while the previously pacifist and isolationist Democratic party of William Jennings Bryan rallied to Wilson's internationalism.

There has been much serious and interesting debate over foreign policy among conservatives in recent years. But let us not pretend that this debate has been unaffected by political developments. For all the high-minded theoretical disputes that have filled our intellectual journals, the realist or neo-isolationist tendencies of most conservatives (Patrick J. Buchanan notwithstanding) can be traced not to 1991 and the breakup of the Soviet Union—not, in other words, to an earnest attempt to grapple with the new realities of the post-Soviet strategic environment—but to the election of Bill Clinton.

Why, for instance, was the term “international social work,” coined by a disgruntled former Clinton adviser, applied by Republicans only to interventions that occurred after 1993? Perhaps the purest form of “humanitarian” action ever conducted by the United States was George Bush's intervention in Somalia in 1992 to stop a politically-induced famine, but I do not recall much conservative outrage over that deployment of American troops on a humanitarian mission. A couple of years earlier, Bush had sent thousands of American soldiers to Panama to remove a thug from power and to establish a more functional democracy there. (Contrary to Republican revisionist history, the invasion of Panama was not aimed at protecting the Canal.) Panama was, in essence, Bush's Haiti. Where were Republican criticisms then of our reckless adventures in “nation-building” and “democracy-promotion”? If a Republican President had taken the United States to war in Kosovo last year, I believe a majority of Republicans and conservatives would have supported him—and supported not just that specific intervention but the broad rationale for such interventions.

Now, there is much reason to prefer almost any Republican's interventions to Bill Clinton's, just as there was much reason to prefer Hamilton's navy to Jefferson's. But is the distinction really a matter of principle? Where many conservatives have erred

these past eight years has been in elevating their justifiable mistrust of Clinton's leadership in specific cases to the level of a general theory about how America ought to conduct its foreign policy.

Instead of opposing Clinton's internationalism, such conservatives have opposed internationalism. Instead of opposing Clinton's ineffective methods of intervention, they have opposed intervention. They have erected what they insist are enduring principles of American foreign policy—no “humanitarianism,” no “nation-building,” no exporting of democracy—for the purpose of indicting Clinton. The price of using doctrinal elephant guns to shoot a political flea is that conservatives have driven themselves into a neo-isolationist corner where they have no business being.

This may sound a bit cynical, but actually it is good news. Such politically-driven “reassessments” of American foreign policy are easily reversed. If George W. Bush or John McCain occupies the White House next year, we will find a majority of Republicans and conservatives largely cured of their neo-isolationism and even, I imagine, of their parsimonious “realism.” (By the same token, I suspect a Republican President in 2001—at least, a Republican President of internationalist disposition like Bush or McCain—will cure most Democrats and liberals of their current internationalism.) Anyone who watched or read Bush's speech at the Reagan Library in November knows that he left much room for American intervention in future Bosnias and Kosovos. It was the episodic, inconstant, and ineffective nature of Clinton's interventions that Bush criticized, not the appropriateness of the interventions themselves.

I do not wish to make light of the arguments advanced by our most astute and articulate realists. There has been and remains a legitimate theoretical debate over the principles that should guide American foreign policy in the post-cold-war era, over whether the United States should intervene abroad more or less frequently, and for what reasons. But I would suggest that the real test for conservative realists of the 1990's vintage will come after January 2001, when a Bush or McCain leads the country to war in some less-than-central part of the world out of the same uncertain mixture of principle and interest that led his predecessors into Panama, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo.

Then it will be clearer if there has been a genuine shift in conservative opinion on foreign policy, or whether what we have witnessed over the past eight years has been just another spin of the electoral wheel. Maybe, with a Republican in office,

conservatives and liberals alike will return to their respective beds and leave the company of strangers.

ROBERT KAGAN is a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and co-editor, with William Kristol, of *Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in American Foreign and Defense Policy*, forthcoming from Encounter Books.

Zalmay Khalilzad

NORMAN PODHORETZ describes the writings of recent commentators on foreign policy as marked by contradictions and inconsistencies, in contrast with the more cohesive postures taken during the cold war. Podhoretz is puzzled by this development. I am not. The fundamental reason is that nothing has jelled to replace the central strategic fault-line of the cold-war era—essentially a strategy of opposition to the Soviet Union.

The reason a grand strategy has not emerged is that we do not face a global adversary who threatens our very existence, and we therefore have the luxury of not being forced to choose among alternative designs. It is also true that, given the absence of a clear enemy, our political culture is disinclined toward any such designs. Although strong presidential leadership would have overcome this constraint, President Clinton has not provided it. In any event, the absence of an agreed-upon framework has placed the U.S. in a largely reactive mode, and this is what explains the inconsistencies and contradictions Podhoretz captures.

What might such a framework look like? In essence, three realistic alternatives are available: to give up leadership by facilitating the rise of a multipolar system; to embrace isolationism and focus on promoting prosperity at home; or to consolidate American preeminence by precluding the rise either of a global rival or of a multipolar system. In various writings since 1992, I have favored the last as the best long-term guiding principle for our national security.

The United States today is the most powerful state in the international system. Although preserving this position is not an end in itself, a world in which the U.S. continues to be the preeminent power will be more receptive to democracy, free markets, and the rule of law, and also will have a better chance of avoiding another global cold or hot war.

Three sets of interrelated factors could pose threats to this design. First, if one or more major countries became more powerful and challenged the United States. Second, if there were to be a substantial relative decline in U.S. economic and military power brought about, for example, by overextension. Third, if a hostile power were to gain control of a critical region.

Let me focus here on the first set of factors, with a comment about overextension. At present, our potential rivals are either too weak or are already our allies. In the near term, this situation is unlikely to change significantly, but for the longer term we need to maintain our alliances by focusing on current and emerging threats to joint interests. In Europe this means stabilizing the new democracies in Eastern Europe; increasing our common ability to deal with challenges from the South—threats to the energy supply, terrorism, weapons proliferation, and religious or political extremism; and hedging against uncertainties in Russia even as we encourage the rule of law, market reform, and democratization there. Together we must also incrementally extend the zone of democracy, peace, and prosperity.

In Asia, our alliances have not adapted to the changing environment. In addition to the threat from North Korea, the U.S. and its allies face the risks of Balkanization in Southeast Asia and the long-term possibility that China might seek regional hegemony. How China evolves will have the greatest impact of all.

Given the inherent uncertainties in China, a pure engagement strategy that seeks expanded relations in the hope of positively influencing Chinese policy or changing China into a friendly democratic power seems to me quite risky. By helping China to develop economically and technologically, it can create the basis for future strength, and if the assumption about democratization proves incorrect, it will also help China become a more threatening regional—and perhaps global—rival.

But a pure containment strategy is also unwise. Fatalistically assuming that China is bound to be an adversary overlooks the possibility of domestic change and of a positive evolution in our relations.

Instead of pure engagement or containment, what seems to me appropriate is “conengagement”—a strategy somewhere between the two with elements of both. Under such a policy, we would continue to enhance economic, political, and cultural ties with China, but we would be less solicitous of Chinese sensitivities on issues like human rights. By tightening our export controls, we would do nothing.

ing directly to help increase Chinese military capability. We would also seek to strengthen relations among states that could form the core of an alliance against China should it push for regional hegemony, and likewise strengthen our own security relations with these countries. On Taiwan, we would preserve and stabilize the status quo for as long as China's future remains uncertain. Through these measures, and by strengthening our own military posture in Southeast Asia, including, in the long term, establishing a military base there, we would point out to China the costs of turning hostile.

A strategy of precluding the rise of global rivals will not succeed unless we maintain our military and economic strength. But one major risk we face is overextension, a mistake made by some great powers in the past. Given the absence of a systemic rivalry, the U.S. can be quite selective in its military involvement, but during the past several years we have not been selective enough. Unless recent trends are reversed, we will either have to fund a much larger armed force or erode our capability of dealing with threats to critical interests, such as in the Persian Gulf. Emphasizing greater selectivity does not mean indifference to humanitarian interests in places like Bosnia; but in such situations we should consider other options, including arming and training the victims of aggression.

Since the end of the cold war, the idea has gained ground that the world is now more uncertain. That is only partially correct. In the past the enemy was known, but it was not easy to predict either his behavior—"Kremlinology" was an almost mystical science—or other threatening developments around the world. We were, however, relatively certain of our overall objectives and the priorities among them. That is no longer so; it should be again.

ZALMAY KHALILZAD, director of policy planning at the Department of Defense during the Bush administration, now directs strategic studies at the RAND corporation.

Jeane J. Kirkpatrick

JAMES Q. WILSON has observed that "elite beliefs are probably more important in explaining foreign-policy decisions than in accounting for decisions in other policy areas." He is right as usual. Elites interpret our problems and our duty. They even try to tell us who we are and why it matters.

When their views change, we know our culture has changed.

The views of our political elites seem to have changed dramatically since the end of the cold war, but the extent and character of the change have not been adequately explored. Like an earthquake of gigantic proportions, the collapse of Communism in the West shook all manner of political, strategic, and metaphysical certainties from their foundations, leaving questions and problems where dogma and habit had ruled. It is therefore a good thing that COMMENTARY is sponsoring this discussion.

On no issue is the change so marked as the use of force. When the Reagan administration offered arms and training to the Nicaraguan resistance, law professors all over America pronounced the policy illegal and utterly rejected the argument that force could under certain circumstances be used to restore or protect democracies. As late as 1989, when the U.S. intervened in Panama under George Bush, leading liberals in and out of Congress described this action as the clearest possible violation of the UN Charter's prohibition on force, and professors of international law reminded all and sundry that the use of force against another state is *never* justified except in self-defense, a concept that was itself to be very narrowly interpreted.

These extremely negative attitudes also colored the liberal response to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, even after the UN Security Council authorized force against him. And when, Security Council resolutions in hand, George Bush sought authorization from the U.S. Congress—as required by the U.S. Constitution—the outcome of the Senate vote remained in doubt to the very end, even though Iraq's invasion of Kuwait across an international border was as clear a case of aggression as could be imagined. The vocal opposition of leading Democrats to the U.S. role in the Gulf was finally silenced only by enthusiastic popular support for the performance of American armed forces and high-tech weapons.

But then came the great change. By the time they reentered government with Bill Clinton, a generation of 60's liberals had rethought their views on force and intervention. With the definitive end of the cold war and the arrival in power of a new foreign-policy team, liberal isolationism was—almost overnight—replaced by a new doctrine of global engagement. Hostility to the use of force gave way to doctrines of "peacekeeping," "democracy-building," and "nation-building." Over the past few years, force has been justified in the pursuit of diverse causes: separating parties to a conflict, disarming warlords

in remote countries, “restoring democracy” (Haiti), “containing” conflict (Macedonia), providing “advisers” (Bosnia), and delivering Kosovo from ethnic cleansing.

And yet—not everything has changed after all. I believe the most important issues confronting America today are those of identity and survival. Because the United States is the strongest country in the world, more than a few foreign governments and their leaders, and more than a few activists here at home, seek to constrain and control American power by means of elaborate multilateral processes, global arrangements, and UN treaties that limit our capacity both to govern ourselves and to act abroad. Moreover, although most of the policy positions developed in the long bipolar competition with the Soviet Union are now obsolete, some—as it happens, the ones touching especially on the twin cardinal issues of our identity and our survival—are still preserved in the Washington policy community and among the intellectual elites like beetles in amber.

Missile defense is the most salient issue here. No hostile power of comparable size or strength to the Soviet Union exists today, but several dictatorships of violent tendency and hostile intent—Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Syria, Libya—are working hard to acquire ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction. North Korea has demonstrated its potential to cross the ICBM threshold. China must also be considered. But Democrats still oppose an effective missile-defense system to protect America and its allies.

From the time the Soviet Union developed the capacity to reach the United States with its nuclear weapons until today, leading liberals and Democrats have taken the view that there should be no defense against such an attack. In the past, they supported a strategy of Mutual Assured Destruction that left everyone vulnerable. In this mutual vulnerability they paradoxically saw common security. That common security, they still argue, is what will be destroyed if one side develops defenses against a nuclear attack by the other. That was the rationale behind the 1972 Antiballistic Missile treaty with the USSR, which was intended to prevent the “destabilizing” development of an effective defense, and it is the rationale we remain wedded to today.

True, some liberals and Democrats are quietly altering their stand on missile defense, but they still basically prefer to reinforce the balance of terror in the world by means of agreements to limit offensive weapons of all types, chemical and biological as well as nuclear. The problem with this arms-

control approach to security is that the same governments against which we most need to protect ourselves are those most likely to violate the treaties—as the Soviet Union violated the ABM treaty, as Iraq and North Korea have violated the Nuclear Nonproliferation treaty, and so forth. The fact that Iraq and North Korea, India and Pakistan have ignored the “nonproliferation regime” in which we so fervently believe has had, thus far, remarkably little effect on the debate. Nor has the reality of our ongoing vulnerability penetrated the consciousness of many of our foreign-policy intellectuals. Perhaps we need to discuss that, too.

JEANE J. KIRKPATRICK, who served as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations from 1981 to 1986, is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

Charles Krauthammer

THE PRINCIPAL practical disagreement between the “globalist” and “realist” schools of foreign policy concerns what Eliot A. Cohen calls “imperial policing.” This involves “ill-defined and usually secondary or tertiary national interests.”

Realists believe that superpowers don’t do windows. Globalists counter first by citing American credibility: if we do not act to stop the war in Bosnia, or sovereign savagery against a rebellious province in Kosovo, others will be emboldened to do as the Serbs have done. The Russians, for example.

Well, we did intervene in Bosnia, and in Kosovo, and the Russians then blithely ignored our example and ravaged Chechnya. So much for deterrence.

The other argument is psychological: we should exercise our power because we have it. If we allow ourselves to turn away from relatively minor conflicts, then, when the real test comes, we will be flabby and unprepared. Shirking becomes a habit, then a policy, then an ideology. A policy of national greatness requires the continual assertion of that greatness. We have the power. Use it or lose it.

The answer to this kind of psychological theory of interventionism has been best given by Francis Fukuyama. He makes the point that “the much greater danger is use it *and* lose it. That is: intervening for secondary and poorly-thought-out objectives and therefore wasting the political capital we have for large interventions later. We cannot work our way up to [large serious interventions] by swatting flies in anticipation.” The worst thing that we can do in the name of keeping ourselves glob-

ally engaged is to squander our strength and political capital on tasks as remote from the American national interest as reconstructing Somalia, democratizing Haiti, and pacifying the Balkans.

The only sound theory of global engagement for the post-cold-war world is a dry-powder theory of intervention. In a country with strong isolationist tendencies, you do not squander blood and treasure on teacup wars.

This is an anti-isolationist theory of (relative) noninterventionism, or, as I would prefer, of prudent and selective intervention. Why? Because one needs to preserve one's strength for major exertions. In an era of relative quiet, you do not run around putting out small fires just because they are the only ones burning. You save your resources for the real strategic threats.

What are they?

First, containing, deterring, and, if necessary, disarming rogue states that are acquiring weapons of mass destruction, states that could threaten with unprecedented power not only our allies and our troops abroad, but eventually America itself.

Second, containing a rising China, a country whose position on the globe at the turn of the 21st century is comparable to that of Germany at the turn of the 20th—a large, growing, former have-not, seeking its place in the sun, pushing inexorably against its neighbors.

Third, maintaining vigilance against the possibility of a resurgent, revanchist Russia.

Fourth, maintaining order as the ultimate guarantor of international peace and stability. As the only nation that can project power anywhere in the world decisively and overwhelmingly, our role is to husband our resources to meet supraregional challenges—i.e., those that threaten not just a country or a region but the stability of the international system itself.

A prime example is the Gulf war. We went to war over Kuwait not because we were opposing aggression in the abstract but because we were trying to prevent a radical enemy from gaining control of the greatest oil reservoir on the planet and from feeding its appetite for weapons of mass destruction. This was no teacup. Saddam threatened to become a supraregional threat. It was therefore the role—the unique role—of the United States to intervene to slap him down. No one else could. That is our job.

In many ways, the strategic role of the United States is comparable to the role practiced classically by Britain. Britain was the balancer of last resort in Europe. The United States is the balancer of last resort in the world. We are needed to balance oth-

erwise unbalanceable rogue states like North Korea and Iraq; to shore up the periphery against an expanding China; to guard against Russia until its destiny is settled. This role requires huge resources to maintain the forces that will stand ready to thwart those threats. And these are the resources that are being stretched and squandered on humanitarian missions best left to Sweden.

Is imperial policing not stabilizing? In some limited sense, yes. Any intervention is presumably triggered by some existing instability that could be at least temporarily suppressed by policing. Unfortunately, however, the stabilization is likely to be temporary. Our efforts in Somalia and Haiti have been written on water; we leave those places much as they were when we came. And the reason we are stuck in Bosnia and Kosovo is precisely the same: we know that if we leave, the deluge returns.

Moreover, the harm done by these minor interventions to the stability of the larger international system can be great. Note only the damage that Kosovo caused to American relations with Russia, China, and Greece. Much higher still is the long-term cost to the United States of these discretionary wars, the distraction from our primary and unique mission and the drain on the military, diplomatic, and domestic political resources necessary to sustain that mission.

The essence of the neorealist position is this: we shall have no lack of challenges. During the relative quiescence that has followed victory in the cold war, we should not dissipate our energies looking for trouble where it matters little. Trouble will soon come looking for us—from rising powers, from regional conflict in a place we may not even anticipate, and from the spread of weapons of mass destruction to outlaw states. We had better gird ourselves for those threats with our powder dry.

CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER, *a contributing editor of the New Republic and the Weekly Standard, writes a syndicated weekly column for the Washington Post and a monthly essay for Time.*

William Kristol

DO STRANGE bedfellows make the best bedfellows? I really wouldn't know. So far as I can tell, it has been pretty much the same old band of monogamous bedfellows hanging around the neo-Reaganite camp for the last few years. Perhaps

that will change when prospective recruits learn from Norman Podhoretz how "ardent" Robert Kagan and I have been in advancing our cause; we can only hope.

Kagan and I have argued a very simple proposition: U.S. foreign policy was successful in the 1980's because it was militarily strong, strategically robust, and morally assertive; and it should continue to be all of these things in the post-cold-war world.

To two groups of conservative critics, this proposition seems not just simple but simpleminded. The first group, who range from Charles Krauthammer to Owen Harries to Patrick J. Buchanan, could be called cold-war exceptionalists. Despite the considerable differences among them, all regard the cold war as a strange interlude for the U.S., requiring extraordinary foreign-policy measures and ambitions. Krauthammer, Harries, and Buchanan supported a vigorous political and ideological prosecution of the cold war, and do not (on the whole) regret having done so. But now they want a return to normalcy—to "a republic, not an empire" in the case of Buchanan, to a foreign policy based not on any form of "idealism" but on a modest (Harries) or a hard-headed (Krauthammer) view of our vital national interests.

In their focus on national interest, the cold-war exceptionalists find themselves in bed with the conservative realists, led by the redoubtable Henry Kissinger. The cold-war exceptionalists were willing to countenance "Wilsonian" means to fight Soviet Communism; not so the realists, who were fighting Russia, not the Soviet Union, all along. Indeed, the realists expended a lot of effort trying to ensure that Wilsonian rhetoric never corrupted their hard-headed policy prescriptions. Now that the cold war is over, the realists have redoubled their effort to extirpate America's Wilsonian impulse.

So, adding liberals to the picture, one can group today's foreign-policy debaters into three pretty distinct bedrooms: America as first among the United Nations (the Clintonians), America as a normal country (the conservative realists, joined by the cold-war exceptionalists), and America as an exceptional nation and world leader (the neo-Reaganites). We neo-Reaganites divide our time between explaining that there is a fundamental difference between us and the true Wilsonians—between, that is, the muscular patriotism of Teddy Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan and the utopian multilateralism of Woodrow Wilson and Bill Clinton—and battling the realists over the future of the Republican party.

The two fights tend to merge. While in theory one might think the realists and the Clintonians far

apart, in practice both tend to default to a foreign policy dominated by commercial interests. The realists can never really persuade Americans to follow the lead of Metternich, and the Clintonians can never really persuade us to defer to Kofi Annan. So they agree that we should trade with everyone and hope (in either a realistic or an idealistic way) that commerce will lead to peace and will minimize the challenges we face around the world.

Against this inclination to reduce the business of America to business, we neo-Reaganites try to make the case for freedom and greatness. We could use a few more bedfellows in that endeavor.

WILLIAM KRISTOL is the editor and publisher of the *Weekly Standard*.

Michael Ledeen

IT IS America's inescapable mission to fight for the spread of democracy, and therefore against tyranny. This is so because of who we are: the most successful democratic society in history. Our specific policies are usually beside the point; tyrants hate us because their legitimacy is undermined by our very existence. Hitler, Lenin, Stalin, and Stalin's heirs knew this, and so did the Japanese warlords and Saddam Hussein. The Chinese tyrants and Slobodan Milosevic know it today. Oppressed people everywhere care so deeply about the fortunes of the United States because they know that if we fall, they are doomed.

Whenever I hear policy-makers talk about the wonders of "stability," I get the heebie-jeebies. That is for tired old Europeans and nervous Asians, not for us. In just about everything we do, from business and technology to cinema and waging war, we are the most revolutionary force on earth. We are not going to fight foreign wars or send our money overseas merely to defend the status quo; we must have a suitably glorious objective. We are therefore not going to stick by a government that conducts foreign policy on the basis of *Realpolitik*. Without a mission, it is only a matter of time before public opinion will turn against any American administration that acts like an old-fashioned European nation-state. Just ask Henry Kissinger.

That is why I find the realist position highly unrealistic. The only truly realistic American foreign policy is an ideological one that seeks to advance the democratic revolution wherever and whenever

possible. I was sickened by the Bush administration's failure to celebrate our victory in the cold war, and by the grotesque spectacle of President Bush asking Russians and Ukrainians to support a Communist regime instead of seeking freedom. I was discouraged when we failed to pursue the Gulf war to the logical and necessary conclusion of removing Saddam Hussein's murderous regime, just as in the 1970's I had been dismayed at our policy of détente with the Soviet Union. In like manner, I have been appalled by the Clinton administration's appeasement of China's Communist dictators, and by its refusal to use military power to destroy the Milosevic regime in Serbia.

That said, I often agree with the realists on questions of tactics. I was opposed to the bombing in Kosovo because I did not believe the Clinton administration was capable of using military power correctly (that is, to bring down the Milosevic regime and replace it with something more civilized). I was in favor of using military force early in the Bosnian conflict, and I found the various agreements and the ultimate deployment of "peacekeepers" to be unworthy of the world's lone superpower. These were stopgap measures, not serious policies. Add to them Clinton's shameful betrayal of the democratic forces in Iraq, and you have a dangerous message being sent to our enemies: America can be challenged, and you will live to fight another day.

China is the true litmus test for policy-makers and thinkers, and I was therefore disappointed that Norman Podhoretz dealt with it only briefly. None of us is smart enough to know with certainty what China is going to look like ten or even five years from now. Yes, it could effect a transition to democratic capitalism and become our greatest Asian ally. But it could also become a very nasty tyrannical enemy. And of course it could explode or implode; surely China's problems are grave enough to produce a massive convulsion. In any case, we must do everything in our power to ensure that China does not have enough military power to destroy us.

But that is precisely what Bill Clinton and his henchmen have not done. With a singlemindedness that will astonish future historians, this administration has sold the Chinese our finest military technology, often at bargain-basement prices. We have sold them more supercomputers—the central nervous system of modern warfare—than we possess in our own military and intelligence agencies combined. We have sold them nuclear-modeling software, missile-guidance systems, MIRV technology, underwater sensors, fiber-optic cable,

the technology for global positioning systems, and multi-axis machine tools to produce the special "skin" for advanced aircraft and cruise missiles.

This is the greatest crime committed by the Clinton administration, in cahoots with Congress, with a flock of distinguished realists who assure us there is nothing to worry about, and with a popular press that can only focus on one scandal at a time. If we get a real change in the executive branch next year, the new President will have to order a detailed damage assessment to figure out what sort of Chinese threat we may conceivably face, and how much time we have to field an army that can beat it.

It is hard to be optimistic, because the pattern of American interventionism in this century is remarkably consistent: we have not initiated action against major powers, but rather waited for them to attack us. We are never ready for the next war, and believing, against all the historical evidence, that peace is the normal condition of mankind, we demobilize after every victory.

If we were serious about foreign policy, we would never have dismantled the export-control system that deprived the Soviet Union of advanced military technology. Instead, we have unilaterally junked the system and armed China. If we were serious, and true to our national mission, we would encourage the democratic forces in China, and we would clearly support the democratic government of Taiwan. Instead, we find excuses for Chinese domestic repression, and waffle on Taiwan. In short, although we certainly have the wherewithal to advance the cause of the democratic revolution, it remains to be seen whether we have the wisdom, and the courage, to act.

MICHAEL LEDEEN, *who holds the Freedom chair at the American Enterprise Institute, is the author of Machiavelli on Modern Leadership.*

Edward N. Luttwak

NORMAN PODHORETZ is a good and wise man, whose well-known pugnacity derives not from mere temperament but rather from the intensity of his beliefs, most of which I share. Always guided by solid common sense in addition to intellect, he has long been the straight arrow in America's discourse on foreign affairs, never captive to the modish temptations that many other intellectuals have failed to resist.

My business, however, is strategy—the realm of paradox, irony, and contradiction, in which nothing is solid and nothing is straight, because the presence of reacting adversaries confounds every straightforward proposition. Because Norman Podhoretz always made the right choices during the cold-war years in which I knew him (after 1972), I assumed that he understood strategy as well as so much else. For example, he was unimpressed by the widely influential contention that nuclear superiority was useless merely because none of its possible manifestations (multiplicity of warheads, expected accuracies, energy yields) could be exploited operationally in realistic scenarios. That the measures in question were purely theoretical meant nothing: any balance of power is a matter of perceptions unless and until war breaks out, when quite other capabilities come into effect. Podhoretz understood that, just as he understood that the “arms race” was not to be deplored or actually limited for it served to keep the peace, by nullifying optimistic war plans and by venting pressures that might otherwise induce far more dangerous land-grabs.

But as soon as the cold war was over, Podhoretz reverted to commonsense logic, i.e., unstrategic thinking, while I remained wedded to strategy, and thus we parted company. When Kuwait was invaded, he saw the opportunity to destroy Saddam Hussein’s vicious regime, and apparently did not ask himself what would happen in the aftermath. I instead saw the opportunity to use Saddam Hussein’s highly circumscribed power to good effect, as well as the disadvantages of defeating him too well. If you have an especially horrible enemy, destroy him by all means if you can, but only if you have no other enemies and rivals in the region and the world. But if you do have other acknowledged or insidious enemies and rivals (the normal predicament), it is usually advantageous to do no more than contain the horrible enemy and leave him strong, for he is horrible to others as well—who are therefore forced into cooperation with you, or even subservience—whereas destroying his power leaves others only slightly less dangerous free to inflict harm and releases the arrogance of former dependents, who may make all sorts of demands instead of praying for the continuation of their own protection.

While employed in the Pentagon as a target-selection consultant before and during the Gulf war—an essentially operational-level function at best—I did not stop thinking about the direct, indirect, and second-order repercussions of different outcomes at the level of grand strategy. For example, if the supply of Gulf oil as a whole should be-

come nullified by blockade and reciprocal attacks, the United States, with oil now at \$100 a barrel, would have had to become self-sufficient in energy, incidentally generating much high-wage employment to produce the needed coal, shale oil, etc.; Mexico, Venezuela, and indeed much of Latin America would have gained much in oil revenues, and so would the Russian Federation, whose democratic evolution would have been greatly favored thereby. It was chiefly the commercial rivals of the United States in Europe and the Far East that would have been the losers—all very prosperous countries with elastic economies that could easily afford the costs of oil substitution.

There were many other second-order repercussions to be calculated as well, including the end of Saudi oil revenues and with it the flow of money to Islamists everywhere. In the Arab-Israeli context, Yasir Arafat and King Hussein of Jordan would have been locked into place as Saddam Hussein’s allies instead of becoming claimants of American benevolence. Nor were my speculations dominated by the fear that Iraq might unveil competent strategic forces; the chaotic profusion of its efforts that seemed sinister to others I interpreted as evidence of massive incompetence. Just before the war, I wrote in the *New York Times* that even if the Iraqis launched every ballistic missile in their arsenal at Israel, there would be fewer than 50 fatalities at most, and not much destruction; in the event, the Iraqis employed only a part of their inventory against Israel, and the only fatalities were caused by the decision to distribute gas masks to the entire population, including people with impaired breathing, while most of the damage to housing was caused by the debris of Patriot missiles falling back to earth. (That, incidentally, reflects one more paradoxical rule of strategy: no defense can be cost-effective against an ineffectual threat.)

Today, at the level of grand strategy, Norman Podhoretz wants to make the United States stronger by achieving a greater degree of coherence in its foreign policy, and by spending more on the armed forces. I fully agree that it is chiefly the incoherence of its foreign policy that diminishes the perceived power of the United States. But I believe that American interests are *well served* thereby.

It was an accident of history that left the United States as the world’s only superpower. If its potential economic leverage (now mostly hijacked by commercial interests), cultural influence, and military superiority were employed coherently, in a disciplined, power-maximizing way, its weight in world affairs would be such that all political entities de-

sirous of retaining their independence would coalesce against it, to oppose, resist, sabotage, and undermine all its initiatives (as the French already do), finally diminishing net U.S. power below present levels.

Not being a public official, it is not my duty to explain my particular applications of the paradoxical logic of strategy to all and sundry, but I had entertained the hope that Norman Podhoretz would understand, just as during the cold war he understood the usefulness of unused weapons and the beneficial role of the arms race.

EDWARD N. LUTTWAK is a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C. and the author, most recently, of *Turbo-Capitalism: Winners and Losers in the Global Economy*.

Walter A. McDougall

ALTHOUGH I, too, cherish the memory of those heady days when we all fought the good fight together, Norman Podhoretz's reading of the recent past cannot go unchallenged.

He begins by assuming that "historians have never stopped quarreling" over whether the United States has been or is by nature "isolationist." In fact, few serious diplomatic historians would describe America's relationship to the world as isolationist in any era, and none would do so without carefully defining the term. Unfortunately, Podhoretz forces the reader to tease out what he means by this dirty word, and ends up committing the same misdeed for which he faults Bill Clinton: reckless and promiscuous use of the term in such varied contexts that it ends up meaning nothing, or whatever his polemics need it to mean.

Thus, Podhoretz dismisses the Eisenhower administration—which made alliances all over the world, threatened aggressors with "massive retaliation," lost no ground to known Communists (Castro hid his allegiance), and kept the peace—as all talk and no action, while implicitly praising the Democrats of that era for their bellicosity. Then, when Democrats turn dovish because of the Vietnam war, it comes as a "shock."

What Podhoretz does not grasp is that the crusading ethos that intoxicated Democrats from Woodrow Wilson to Lyndon Johnson is the flip side of isolationist moral disarmament, as opposed to the businesslike internationalism of Republicans

from Theodore Roosevelt and Charles Evans Hughes to Dwight D. Eisenhower and Richard Nixon. Thus, as soon as the Democrats lost faith in their own moral superiority, they lurched to the other, "Come Home, America," extreme.

But instead of concluding that the real lesson of 1968 is that isolationism is a close cousin of self-righteous moralism, Podhoretz links it instead to pacifism. This false linkage allows him not only to condemn the McGovernites but to describe the efforts of Nixon and Kissinger to extricate America from Vietnam as reluctant bows to the new isolationism, culminating in their belief "that military intervention in analogous conflicts was now politically out of the question." That would have come as news to the North Vietnamese under American B-52's in 1972, not to mention the Israelis in 1973, for whom Nixon was willing to go on nuclear alert. For that matter, Jimmy Carter's emphasis on human rights and third-world problems was no ostrich strategy, either.

It was Reagan, of course, who turned us around, but Podhoretz does not understand how. He calls it a "great irony" that Reagan wanted to abolish nuclear weapons, and an "even greater irony" that his "nuclear pacifism" contributed to the fall of the USSR. But it was not ironic at all: the Reagan arms buildup, climaxed by SDI, targeted the expensive arsenal of fear and extortion to which the Soviets had mortgaged their economy. Otherwise, Reagan, like Eisenhower, was extremely cautious, waging no wars and employing force only in Grenada and Libya—operations Podhoretz himself calls "mere pinpricks." What helped to bring down the Soviet empire was Reagan's brilliant combination of Wilsonian rhetoric and hard-headed geopolitics, with an assist from the bust-up of OPEC.

After the cold war, when "everyone seemed at sea where foreign policy was concerned," Podhoretz predicted that the absence of a clear enemy would "give rise to a more blatant and widespread pacifism than we had seen since the 1930's." Hence it was to his "amazement" that George Bush waged the Gulf war, and even "more amazing" that Bush won public support for it. He would have been less amazed if he had questioned his working assumption about Americans' innate isolationism and instead appreciated that their willingness to lead abroad is a function of leadership at home.

Having been amazed by Bush's success, Podhoretz then failed to anticipate the Clinton phenomenon, which initially seemed to him to reflect "a full-fledged resurgence of isolationism and pacifism" after all. He is now forced to confess that he

got Clinton wrong, too. Both Clinton and the liberals have emerged as "positively bloodthirsty" in their zeal to use the military abroad, a phenomenon Podhoretz found "incredible" until he figured out that they just favor multilateral, humanitarian wars in which, presumably, no real American interests are at stake. That, in turn, is what has sparked an apparent flip-flop on the part of some conservatives who are now opposed to crusading abroad.

But who are the floppers? Not Henry Kissinger, whom Podhoretz credits with geopolitical consistency. And not Charles Krauthammer, Peter W. Rodman, or Fareed Zakaria, whom he describes as realistic internationalists trying to adjust to the end of the ideological cold war. So the "strange bedfellows," the new isolationists of the Right, the avatars of this terrible trend are reduced to just two, one of whom, Edward N. Luttwak, is dismissed as not influential. That leaves Patrick J. Buchanan, a minority of one.

Podhoretz concludes by restating his claim that "many liberals and conservatives alike" have made significant, even 180-degree, shifts. But his own evidence disproves this: the realists have been consistent, the only rightists to flip-flop are the inconsequential Luttwak and Buchanan, while leftists of the Anthony Lewis persuasion have been dogged in their opposition to the U.S. national interest. The purpose of invoking the myth of a "180-degree shift" seems to be to praise the sole group—the neoconservatives—that, in Podhoretz's estimation, "has held steadfastly" to its perspective. That said, he proceeds to list all the issues on which neoconservatives disagree, coming around in the end to embrace the muscular Wilsonianism of William Kristol and Robert Kagan.

I have argued elsewhere that the Kristol-Kagan case for a "neo-Reaganite" foreign policy aimed at imposing a "benevolent American hegemony" is wrongheaded from the standpoint of history, strategy, and even domestic politics (*Orbis*, Winter 1998). Here let me say that the crusade preached by Kristol and Kagan is not the only alternative to isolationism, and that it does not amount to "making the world safe for democracy." If it did, I would be on board myself. It amounts, rather, to "making the world democratic," and differs from Clintonism only in the correct supposition that a crusade of such magnitude requires rather more weapons than we now possess.

WALTER A. McDOUGALL is a professor of international relations and history at the University of Pennsylvania and the editor of *Orbis*.

Joshua Muravchik

THE COGENT taxonomy offered by Norman Podhoretz sent me back to his "Neoconservatism: A Eulogy" (COMMENTARY, March 1996). There he argued that on most issues, foreign policy included, neoconservatism was no longer distinguishable from conservatism. "[O]nly a tiny handful," he wrote, "still advocate the expansive Wilsonian interventionism that grew out of the anti-Communist passions of the . . . cold war."

Today, Podhoretz places himself and a number of others, including me, in a group that believes that "the proper strategic objective of the United States is 'to make the world safe for democracy.'" My own impression is that most of those who once made up the distinctive neoconservative camp now identify with this position, albeit with notable exceptions like Charles Krauthammer. Perhaps, then, the eulogy was premature. Now that the smoke from the implosion of Communism has cleared, a peculiarly neoconservative foreign policy has indeed reemerged.

Podhoretz calls this position "post-Reagan Reaganism," but we might also call it Wilsonian Reaganism or Reaganite Wilsonianism. The linking of the names of these two Presidents—one of them, as Podhoretz says, "a pillar of the liberal tradition, the other of the conservative"—underscores his point that what is distinctive about our position is that it aims to assert both American interests and American values. (In contrast, conservative realists would give more emphasis to the former, liberals to the latter.) This dual emphasis reflects not merely an effort to find a middle position or to avoid choices but rather the view that America's interests and values are much easier to separate in theory than in practice.

The extension of American power and influence has been the most important engine of the advance of American values. This is hardly to deny that American power has been sometimes misused. Rather, it is to assert that American power has been the linchpin of the remarkable global spread of freedom and prosperity and the prevention of a third world war. As a corollary, the perdurance of these welcome circumstances is far likelier in an atmosphere of continued American power and influence.

Conversely, America has done well by doing good. Old World diplomats and their "realist" cousins on this side of the Atlantic often look upon America's approach, with its strong admixture of idealism, as naive. But how do they account for America's remarkable success? In truth, the higher

content of idealism in U.S. policy is a source of strength. It has helped to evoke great sacrifice from the American people and to build a body of sympathetic opinion in other lands, and it has made the presence of American power more often welcomed than feared by other governments.

This is the answer to Owen Harries's warnings about "the historical tendency . . . for other states to gang up on and challenge the No. 1 state." He is thinking, I suppose, of Napoleon or Hitler, or perhaps of the USSR. These were conquerors posing a very real danger to all. But America poses no threat to the freedom or independence of others, only to their pride or their own imperial ambitions.

Still, there is a germ of truth in Harries's argument: America's vast supremacy surely does breed resentments that were suppressed as long as the USSR presented a repulsive counterweight. Such feelings may not lead others to fight America, but they can make them truculent. One need entertain no starry-eyed images of UN-based multilateralism to appreciate that effective U.S. policy requires cooperation from other states.

How can we accomplish this? The key is to devote our power to purposes that embody our interests and values and that can appeal to others as well. The essence of our platform must be peace and democracy.

That the spread of democracy serves American interests is proved by a wealth of experience; that it is also good for other nations is all but self-evident. One does, of course, hear that people in this or that society "don't want" democracy; but such arguments, appealing as they must to the purported wishes of the people, are hopelessly self-contradictory. Promoting democracy is a goal that emphasizes our commonalities with other democracies and also brings us friends among those striving for democracy in places lacking it.

Peace is a trickier desideratum. Although it is universally proclaimed, there are conflicting ideas about how to pursue it. Rare are the cases where one must repress for the sake of democracy; many are the cases where one must "kill for peace," as mocking anti-Vietnam protesters used to think themselves clever for saying. Thus, if we are to be taken seriously, we must spell out what we mean.

The cornerstone of our peace policy ought to be international law. Article 2.4, the heart of the UN Charter, defines and forbids aggression. Short of committing ourselves to going to war reflexively, we ought to strive to see this law upheld. That is what President Bush did in Kuwait, then failed to do in Bosnia.

The discouragement of aggression, while entailing risks, will serve our self-interest by deterring the emergence of regional hegemony able to threaten our most tangible interests. To be sure, we will incur the wrath of those whose malign ambitions we thwart, but the majority of other nations and people will honor such a use of our power.

In Kosovo, it was we who violated article 2.4. That is why, as Podhoretz notes, I dissented from the prevailing pro-interventionist view within the Wilsonian Reaganite camp, much of which was and is (understandably) dismissive of international law. But, Kosovo notwithstanding, my view is that international law offers us more advantages than disadvantages. The UN Charter itself acknowledges an "inherent right of individual or collective self-defense," and, in addition, most authorities recognize the legitimacy of "humanitarian intervention" in extreme cases of human-rights violation.

These tenets give us adequate latitude to justify resorting to force, with or without the approval of the UN Security Council, in almost all cases in which we would want or need to do so. By resting our actions on a legal basis (and accepting the correlative constraints), we can make the continued exercise of our disproportionate power easier for others to accept.

JOSHUA MURAVCHIK is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and the author of *Exporting Democracy* and *The Imperative of American Leadership*.

Joseph S. Nye, Jr.

NORMAN PODHORETZ is right: despite the rhetoric, the current foreign-policy debates are not about isolationism. Polls show that a large majority of the public favors active American involvement in the world. The real debate is over what principles should guide our use of power. To my recent effort in *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 1999) to spell out these principles, Podhoretz gives an honorable mention: "valiant but not altogether successful." Fair enough, I thought. I looked forward to what he would offer as an alternative. To my surprise, it is the "elevated patriotism" and "global hegemony" advocated by William Kristol and Robert Kagan of the *Weekly Standard*.

Now, I like Kristol and Kagan's commitment to an active American role abroad. A decade ago, when predictions of American decline were the in-

tellectual fashion, I demurred; my 1990 book was entitled, *Bound to Lead*. I also reject the realist dichotomy of interests- versus values-oriented foreign policy. Our values are part of our interests; the prudent promotion of democracy and human rights serves American interests.

But the problem with Kristol and Kagan is that their vehicle has a powerful accelerator and weak brakes. It is unlikely to stay on the road. And when it crashes, it may lead to a public overreaction that can damage our long-term involvement and interests. What the American public is seeking are principles that will keep us involved in the world without our becoming the global cop or hegemon. Here Kristol and Kagan offer precious little help.

Crusaders in foreign policy are stronger on good intentions than on good consequences. Podhoretz is wise enough to recognize this. Though he breaks with the prudence of Owen Harries, he also admits to doubts about Kristol and Kagan's "unabashed enthusiasm." He asks the right questions: "What are the limits that should be set for American intervention? Where, if anywhere, are the lines to be drawn?" Unfortunately, he does not answer them.

Foreign policy involves trying to accomplish varied objectives in a complex and recalcitrant world. This means trade-offs among objectives. A human-rights or promotion-of-democracy policy is not a foreign policy; it is an important part of a foreign policy. What must command priority in the balancing act are threats to survival. Without survival, all other values vanish.

Preventing attacks on the United States by countries or terrorists; preventing the emergence of hostile hegemonies in Asia or Europe; preventing the emergence of dangerous situations on our borders—these deserve priority because they can threaten our survival. To be sure, differences can arise as to how much insurance to buy against the threats. And, in addition to threats, there are also opportunities to consider in shaping foreign policy.

How should we set priorities in such a world? Classical realists like Hans Morgenthau taught us to start with understanding our power. Well into the next century, the United States is likely to remain the preponderant but not the dominant nation. We will want to influence distant governments and organizations on a variety of issues—the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, drugs, resources, and the environment—while also promoting values congenial to our interests.

A basic proposition of public-goods theory is that if the largest beneficiary of a good (such as order) does not take the lead in devoting dispor-

portionate resources to providing and maintaining it, smaller beneficiaries are unlikely to muster the wherewithal to do so. This means that, more than other countries, we have systemic interests to protect. Here we can learn something from Great Britain in the age when it was the preponderant but not the dominant power. Three public goods advanced by Britain in the 19th century were: (1) maintaining the balance of power among the major states; (2) promoting an open international economic system; and (3) maintaining open international commons like freedom of the seas. All three translate relatively well to the current American case.

In terms, first, of the distribution of power, we need to continue to shape the international environment. That is why we keep 100,000 troops forward-based in Europe, another 100,000 in Asia, and some 20,000 near the Persian Gulf. Our role as a stabilizer, insuring against the rise of hostile hegemonies in important regions, has to remain a top priority.

Second, promoting an open international economic system is good for America and good for other countries as well. In the long term, economic growth is also more likely to foster stable, democratic, middle-class societies in other countries, though the time scale may be a lengthy one.

Third, the U.S., like 19th-century Britain, has an interest in freedom of the seas. But the international commons now also include the global climate, the uses of outer space, and, increasingly, cyberspace.

I would add to this list our systemic interest in developing and maintaining international regimes of norms, laws, and institutions to organize actions relating to trade and the environment, weapons proliferation, peacekeeping, and human rights. Those, like Charles Krauthammer, who denigrate the importance of such regimes ignore soft power and the extent to which legitimacy, too, is a reality of power. Hans Morgenthau would not have made such a mistake. Finally, as a preponderant power, the United States can provide an important public good by acting as a mediator and convenor.

To repeat: values like human rights and the promotion of democracy have to be melded and traded off with insurance of our survival and our systemic interests. Otherwise, the so-called CNN effect is likely to support waves of humanitarian sentiment a mile wide and an inch deep—enough to get us into conflicts, as in Somalia, but not to sustain our involvement. This means that the foreign-policy debate we need is over how to integrate our values with our other interests. Who knows? Such a de-

bate might produce more strange bedfellows—and that would be a good thing.

JOSEPH S. NYE, JR., *who served as an Assistant Secretary of Defense in 1994 and 1995, is dean of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.*

David Rieff

THE SENSE of incongruity Norman Podhoretz experienced in finding his own name alongside that of Anthony Lewis's on a petition calling for U.S. military action in the Balkans is entirely understandable, and would, I imagine, be shared by Lewis. The debates Podhoretz charts, beginning in the early days of the cold war, reaching critical mass during the Vietnam war, and continuing even after the collapse of the Soviet empire, were so bitter and unforgiving that both liberals and conservatives still tend, mistakenly, to construe the current U.S. role in international affairs through the prism of those times.

For my own part, I remain unpersuaded by much of Podhoretz's account of the earlier controversies. He writes as if the fact that the struggle against Communism was fundamentally a just and moral crusade manumits him from considering whether its ends justified its means. But it was this concern, far more than the isolationist currents that he anatomizes in such detail, let alone what neoconservatives call anti-anti-Communism, that, beginning in the 1960's, caused so many liberals to reconsider the legitimacy of the cold war. The American officer who during an engagement in Vietnam told a reporter, "we had to destroy the village in order to save it," epitomized, for many, the dangers of an interventionism that seemed contemptuous of the moral restraints that just-war theory and modern international humanitarian law, not to mention commonsense morality, should have imposed.

And yet, having registered my demurrers, I wonder, after reading Podhoretz's piece, how relevant these disputes over the past remain. Perhaps he does as well. To be sure, he endeavors to establish a fundamental continuity between positions taken by neoconservatives like himself during the cold war and what he calls the "post-Reagan Reaganism" of writers and activists like William Kristol and Robert Kagan. But here again, such a continuity is no more intellectually or politically sustainable in the year 2000, already a half-generation removed from the fall of the Berlin Wall, than the old antin-

omies of political Right and Left that Podhoretz himself concedes now make a poor guide for determining where people stand on any particular issue.

In effect, the Kristol-Kagan prescription demands that the U.S. remain in a crusading mode after Jerusalem has been liberated, or, in this case, the Soviet empire has not only been defeated but ceased to exist. But a crusade cannot be based on historical analogies, like Podhoretz's likening of the period we are entering to the one that began in 1919. Nor does a slogan like "making the world safe for democracy," which Podhoretz deploys toward the end of his essay, have any specific gravity in the post-cold-war context, or approach the coherence of the old American ambition to prevent more of the world from becoming Communist.

When Podhoretz speaks of democracy or of the American mission in the world, what does he actually have in mind? Is he, for instance, talking of free elections, like the ones that, had they been allowed to proceed, would have brought Islamic fundamentalism to power in Algeria? Since he argues that the principle of sovereignty should "no longer embrace the right of political leaders to butcher their own people," is he advocating an international human-rights regime, up to and including military intervention to enforce it? On a practical level, this would inevitably involve collaboration with allies, some subordination of U.S. law to international law, and an increased role for multilateral institutions like the United Nations.

The problem is not so much that Podhoretz is a Wilsonian, an epithet against which he indignantly defends himself. The problem is that the perfect coherence he yearns for is simply unattainable except in the special circumstances of a crusade. Politicians understand this instinctively, which is presumably why President Bush had to compare Saddam Hussein to Hitler when he obviously knew better, or why Clinton had to trumpet the intervention in Kosovo as the first of many wars of values, not interests, when the U.S. has neither the intention nor the capability of acting consistently elsewhere as it did in the Balkans.

Neither Podhoretz nor Kagan and Kristol seem willing to confront how anomalous were the conditions—including the ideological conditions—of the second half of the century we have just left. In my own view, the era we have entered is, both for better and for worse, much closer to the historical norm. As such, it calls for much more modest goals. Even if the U.S. is unlikely ever again to be the hegemon it was during the cold war, it will always be a great power. Sometimes it will use that

power purely in defense of interests, as in the Gulf war (although the Gulf war was also an exercise in defense of international law). Sometimes that power can be used, proportionally and with good effect, to right a wrong. But just because the humpty-dumpty of American hegemony cannot or will not ever be put back together again need not be a cause for despair.

The issue, in other words, is not American hegemony but rather the attempt to craft a foreign policy that will coherently articulate both American interests and American values. That is no easy task. The very fact that our foreign policy is subject to so many new pressures—from the false promises held out by a consumer society, to the superficial immediacy of the “live-from-the-battlefield” reporting of CNN and the Internet, to the fracturing of American society along fault lines of both ethnic and elective affinity—is an enormous challenge in itself, for how is one to make foreign policy intelligible not only to our allies and our adversaries but to the American public itself? Certainly, none of the major candidates for the presidency is up to the task. All the more reason, then, to believe that if we can achieve such coherence, we will have achieved a great deal, and certainly more than we will achieve by trying to fan the embers of a hegemony that is anyway rapidly waning.

DAVID RIEFF is currently finishing a book on disaster relief and humanitarian intervention. He is the co-editor, with Roy Gutman, of *Crimes of War: What the Public Should Know*.

Peter W. Rodman

NORMAN PODHORETZ's brilliant survey of the intellectual terrain of American foreign policy leads me to two principal reflections. One has to do with the important degree of political harmony that I now see on the Right. The second has to do with the state of the debate between neo-Reaganites and realists.

Both in content and tone, Podhoretz's essay pays a kind of tribute to the easing of many previous intramural disputes on the Right. This is one of the positive developments of the present period. Differences there certainly are (as over China and humanitarian intervention), and they are not trivial. But Podhoretz's historical survey also reminds us of the much more glaring gulf between Right and Left. The cliché that the end of the cold war has abolished this distinction is mistaken.

As the Clinton administration has brought home to us with a vengeance for seven years, Right and Left in America (even the internationalists among them) still have very different worldviews. The Left retains a certain liberal guilt about American power, which it assuages by an assertive faith in multilateral institutions (the UN, international law), in diplomatic nostrums like multilateral arms control, and in an agenda of New Age issues like environmentalism. The Right is more strategic-minded, less naive about our ability to abolish the factor of power from international politics, and unapologetic about American strength, American sovereignty, and American preeminence. The Right puts more faith in military defense (including missile defense) and greater stock in the geopolitical components of our security (facing down Saddam Hussein and North Korea; preserving our alliance system). Clinton has been reported to dismiss this kind of strategic analysis as “Old Think.”

Liberal guilt about American power also translates into a particular kind of scruple about the use of force. Here I have in mind not just the liberal assumption that the legitimacy of our use of force can come only from some international organization (as when the Clinton administration obtained UN Security Council authorization before occupying Haiti in 1995). Nor do I mean only that the Left sees U.S. intervention as tainted if any “selfish” strategic interest gets in the way of humanitarian goals. In addition to all that, there is a moral discomfort with the actual use of force that leads liberal Democratic Presidents always to cut corners, to do the minimum, and to yearn for “surgical” or “calibrated” ways to do it.

This is the Bay of Pigs syndrome, the albatross of LBJ's “graduated escalation” in Vietnam, the bane of Jimmy Carter's abortive helicopter raid on Iran, and the pattern of Clinton interventions from Somalia to Iraq to Kosovo. By contrast, conservative Presidents have always had a more clear-headed understanding that, once one has made the decision to commit American power, the categorical moral as well as strategic imperative is to prevail.

Despite policy differences among conservatives, this picture illuminates the significant philosophical consensus that today unites them. We can thank Bill Clinton for setting this in such sharp relief.

The second observation I would venture is that the intraconservative debate over humanitarian intervention is also becoming more moderate. Where Norman Podhoretz sides, on balance, with the more ideological enthusiasms of William Kristol and

Robert Kagan, I see the tide shifting in the other direction. I think realism is making a comeback.

For better or worse, neither Congress nor the country exhibits an eagerness for humanitarian intervention. The more expansive Kristol-Kagan definition of America's sense of mission has not taken root. The public seems quite hesitant about new ideological crusades (even against China). Clinton's military interventions have prompted many Americans to ask: what is our national interest in this? (Sam Donaldson of ABC News asked this question repeatedly during both the Bosnia and the Kosovo crises. *Vox populi*.)

The American people seem to want reassurance that their leaders can tell the difference between what is important to us in the world and what is not. Indiscriminate humanitarianism seems unsustainable. If President Clinton was afraid to risk any American casualties in Kosovo, what more damning confession could there be of how thin even he knew public support to be?

The Kristol-Kagan view deserves the label Wilsonian because, even while it clearly represents a muscular, strategic-minded Reaganite rather than Clintonite variant, it is part of a 20th-century trend that has emphasized the moral/ideological well-springs of American international engagement. Indeed, it vigorously rebuked the Nixon-Kissinger brand of *Realpolitik* in precisely those terms. But just as Nixon and Kissinger's attempt to win the country over to their realist philosophy failed during the Vietnam era (spawning the resurgence of Wilsonianism that was reflected in both Carter and Reagan), now Bill Clinton's misadventures have triggered a reaction to Wilsonianism. With humanitarian intervention quite discredited in this country after Kosovo, it is intriguing to see Podhoretz toward the end of his article, and Kristol and Kagan in an October 25 *New York Times* op-ed piece, all running away briskly from the Wilsonian label.

It is the Republicans' task (in the next presidency, one hopes) to rebuild the American people's self-confidence about American international leadership and engagement out of the wreckage that Clinton has wrought. Probably this will require some selectivity rather than universalism, some re-emphasis of the national interest rather than moral and ideological enthusiasm. American predominance in the world is fine with me. But we need to sustain the domestic base for it.

PETER W. RODMAN is director of national-security programs at the Nixon Center in Washington, D.C. and a senior editor of *National Review*.

Robert W. Tucker

ARE WE in a situation, as Norman Podhoretz believes, resembling the one that developed at the end of World War I? The problem of security in Europe after World War I was that of an imbalance of power. Only France was fully committed to enforcing the Treaty of Versailles, and its power was insufficient for the task. Great Britain had increasingly turned away from the continent. The United States, having rejected Versailles, had once again distanced itself from the politics of Europe. Thus the stage was set at an early date for World War II. All that was missing was the political movement and leader that would channel Germany's defeat and humiliation into a war of conquest. From the war that followed, there emerged the cold war.

Today, a decade after the end of the cold war, the alliance that won the conflict remains intact. The United States shows no signs of an intention to abandon its commitment to Europe. Whatever the faults of America's European policy, there has been no replay of the post-World War I period. The nation has rejected a return to isolation. Far from resembling the situation that developed after World War I, the present situation is seen by many as dominated by an intrusive America. American leaders, Samuel P. Huntington writes in a recent indictment of American foreign policy, "believe that the world's business is their business." The critics of American hegemony reject the assumption that, in William Pfaff's words, "American responsibility for world order is the inevitable consequence of American power."

These expressions register opposition to the equation of power and order in international society. While they cannot be dismissed, they do not and cannot rest on the reality of a multipolar world. We do not have a multipolar world, nor do we have the imminent prospect of one. Yet the need for order persists. How is it to be met? Globalization cannot provide the answer. Even if it is the case that everyone wants to preserve the global system of technology and trade, that system is not self-sustaining. It requires a security framework that only a political order can bring.

America's hegemonic power does create a special responsibility for world order. That responsibility, it is true, cannot in some cases satisfy the multilateral condition. Nevertheless, it seems quite doubtful that, as Robert Kagan argues, "multilateralism must be preceded by unilateralism" if American interests and world order are to be preserved. That

unilateralism will beget multilateralism is surely not a self-evident proposition, although it may seem such if one assumes a near-identity of interest between leader and led. This is, of course, what today's unilateralists usually assume. Given that assumption, it is but a short step to the conclusion that what we do for ourselves we not only do for others as well but what others would also do were they to bear an equal responsibility for order.

This is a dangerous argument, even if it sometimes happens to be true. In acting alone, it is much safer to assume that we are acting in pursuit of our own interests and not—at any rate, not necessarily—in the interests of others. For if we were truly intent on acting in the interests of others as well as our own, we would presumably accord to others a substantive role and, by doing so, end up embracing some form of multilateralism. Others, after all, must be supposed to know their interests better than we can know them.

During the long period of the cold war, the justification of American power was the defense of the independence of states from the threat posed by a hostile and expansionist Soviet Union. The policy of containment responded by and large to the time-honored compulsions of the balance of power. The order defended by American power was inseparable from containment.

It is the case that the identification of threats to this order provoked periodic disputes with allies. Unilateral action taken by the principal guarantor of containment did not go without criticisms, at times even harsh criticism. On balance, though, disaffection was limited by the visible threat of Soviet power.

The understandings of this earlier period no longer hold. Although the United States remains the principal guarantor of the post-cold-war order, this order, save for its economic dimension, no longer has the compelling character that the Soviet threat gave to the cold-war order. Our difficulties in obtaining support for more effective sanctions against Iraq testify to this.

Unless we are very lucky, a sustainable foreign policy in the years ahead will require either increasing the means of policy or invoking the greater cooperation of others. And since there is little reason for believing that the means of policy will be increased, we are left to rely on the greater cooperation of others. But the greater cooperation of others will mean that our freedom of action is narrowed. This would already appear to be the price in Europe of greater mutuality, as the Balkan wars have shown. In turn, European cooperation has been a necessary

condition of American domestic support. Unilateralism would forfeit this cooperation.

Invoking the cooperation of others for the maintenance of a liberal order is not exactly an exciting task. Nevertheless, it is the task to which we are apparently fated. Are the American people ready to support such a policy with its inevitable compromises? According to the Kagan-Kristol-Podhoretz outlook, the answer must be no. Lacking a grander purpose, the public will seek (in Kristol and Kagan's words) "deeper and deeper cuts in the defense and foreign-affairs budgets and gradually decimate the tools of U.S. hegemony."

The past decade, however, has already cast doubt on this prophecy. The public has not insisted upon deeper and deeper cuts in the defense and foreign-affairs budgets. On the contrary, it has shown a remarkable steadiness, reflecting a national consensus on the desirability of our remaining the premier global power. The day is long past when a return to isolation is a meaningful prospect.

ROBERT W. TUCKER is professor emeritus of American foreign policy at Johns Hopkins University.

Paul Wolfowitz

NORMAN PODHORETZ's perplexity over the "new foreign-policy debates" is characteristically sincere and honest. In no way should it be confused with President Clinton's phony nostalgia for the allegedly simpler days of the cold war or with presidential candidate Bill Bradley's confidence that "Until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, . . . we knew where we stood on foreign policy."

Such statements are truly astonishing from the leaders of a Democratic party which, for most of the last 25 years, had largely turned its back on the robust internationalism of Harry S. Truman, John F. Kennedy, and Senator Henry M. Jackson. Theirs was the party that voted in overwhelming numbers for the Mansfield amendment to withdraw U.S. troops from Europe, and against the Gulf war; the party whose leaders attacked Ronald Reagan for declaring that the Soviet Union was an "evil empire," and (in an episode of lesser historical significance in which I was involved) the Bush Pentagon for suggesting that we should seek to prevent any hostile power from dominating those regions whose resources could become a source of global power.

Ironically, there is far broader consensus today on issues like the U.S. presence in Korea and Europe than ever during the cold war. Even the notion of American military superiority is taken for granted and seemingly welcomed by people who not many years ago regarded it as dangerous. This has happened partly because the Democratic party, under Clinton's leadership, has tried to contest the foreign-policy mantle won by the Republicans through the successes of Presidents Reagan and Bush, and thereby to reclaim the center of American politics. For opportunistically leading his party away from some of its previous stances, we should perhaps be grateful to Clinton.

While it is surprising that this consensus about American military power has developed at a time when the need for it has become less evident, perhaps the explanation is that these commitments now involve less risk and demand less courage. When Reagan denounced the Soviet Union as an "evil empire," not only did he cause outrage among those on the Left addicted to moral equivalence, but he was attacked as a warmonger: offending the Soviet Union was a dangerous business. Confronting Saddam Hussein took leadership and great courage from President Bush because no one knew that victory would come at such a low cost. It is only recently, when confronting Iraq seems relatively easy, that everyone has become a "hawk." The debate over Kosovo was mild compared to what it would have been had the U.S. been suffering serious losses or even facing that possibility.

Among conservatives, many are now divided by the concern that the U.S. may be undertaking commitments whose importance to the national interest is unclear and which we may abandon if they prove too costly to sustain, as Clinton did in Somalia and as even Reagan did in Lebanon. Or, if we persist, we may find ourselves confronting horrendous costs that we failed to anticipate, as happened in Vietnam. In this connection, it is surprising and a bit unsettling to observe the ease with which Democrats who once embraced George McGovern now speak in a pale echo of President Kennedy's call to "pay any price, bear any burden" in behalf of freedom. Military forces are spoken of as instruments for diplomatic signaling, and even for nation-building. Such talk should make any sensible conservative nervous, and even more so when force is actually used with the gradualism that characterized the war in Vietnam and without any sense of how to "win."

To this I would add the qualifier, however, that the dangers of American overextension do not

seem to me comparable to what they were in Vietnam, and I would agree with Podhoretz that it is far more dangerous to underestimate than to overestimate the risks of a major war in the future. Still, in order to complete his very useful guide for the perplexed, one would need to specify more precisely the mission he sets forth—protecting and preserving freedom, and spreading its blessings—even if doing so may create new fault lines among conservatives.

In particular, when it comes to putting American soldiers in harm's way, there is a big difference between protecting freedom where it exists and spreading it. There are no less important differences between places like the Persian Gulf that could be the sources of major threats to U.S. security and places like Haiti that are not. When it comes to armed intervention, similarly, there is a difference between giving others the means to fight for themselves, as we should have done in Bosnia, and fighting for them. And when it comes to promoting democracy, there is a difference between defending it where it is established, as on Taiwan, and promoting it where it has not yet taken root. In the case of China, our limited influence on that country is more likely to be effective if we take the milder course that President Reagan followed in dealing with authoritarian regimes like the Philippines and South Korea than the approach he took toward our ideological rival in the cold war, the Soviet Union.

Finally, if pressed, I would be more inclined to analogize our own time to 1899 than, as Podhoretz does, to 1919—in the sense that the looming danger over the next twenty years is more likely to be a resurgence of great-power conflict than the ideological crusades of Nazism and Communism that produced World War II and the cold war. But while we cannot be certain what the greatest dangers confronting us will be, the worst imaginable indictment would be if future generations, looking back, were to conclude that our generation could have prevented a global conflict, but failed. It may be hard to measure our actions by so severe a standard at a time when dangers of a global magnitude seem remote. Nonetheless, it is the right standard, and the task of leadership should be to remind the American people that these are indeed the stakes of American preeminence in the world.

PAUL WOLFOWITZ, *who held high-ranking foreign-policy positions in the Reagan and Bush administrations, is dean and professor of international relations at the School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University.*

The Birthday Party

Avner Holtzman

IT WAS taken on Saturday, March 20, 1937, in the town of Swienciany, which lies on the Polish border with Lithuania approximately 50 miles northeast of Vilna. Nine girls and two boys, together with three women and two men, had gathered on a pleasant spring day in the Svirsky home at 11 Pilsudski Street to celebrate the fourth birthday of the youngest girl, Hanele.

Called in to record the event was Yaakov (Yankl) Levine, the local photographer. As the guests arranged themselves in a half-circle around the extended table, he set up his heavy camera, inserted his head under the black cloth, calibrated light and distance, issued last-minute instructions, and finally pressed a button to capture the image on a glass plate at the bottom of his apparatus. The party broke up, the celebrants went about their affairs, and several days later the resulting photograph was delivered to the Svirsky residence, together with numerous postcard-sized copies. Several of these were distributed as souvenirs among the original participants, others dispatched far and wide to relatives in Leningrad, Berlin, and Argentina—testimony to the abundance, security, and sedateness of the lives depicted.

There had been, indeed, special cause for celebration: four-year-old Hanele had only lately re-

covered from a dangerous outbreak of scarlet fever that had seen her hospitalized in Vilna and had left her with permanent damage to her heart. From now on, she would have to adhere to a special diet and abstain from physical effort. The party was thus intended to mark her recuperation as well as her birthday, and many wishes for a long and healthy life were voiced by the adults in attendance.

Obviously, none of the participants could imagine what the future held in store. Not in their worst nightmares could they conceive that in September 1939, a mere two-and-a-half years later, their world would be completely overturned, or that within another two years the community of Swienciany, together with thousands of similar Jewish communities, would be put to an end. Of the sixteen people in the photograph, six were due to perish together on a single bitter day in early October 1941. Six more would be murdered or starved to death in various places between 1940 and 1944. Only four were privileged to see the day of deliverance in 1945, of whom three are still alive today.

ON THAT relaxed spring day, a week before the Passover festival, all this was far beyond the horizon. The family table had been carefully prepared for the event, fitted with an extension, bedecked with a white holiday cloth, and festooned with treats. In the center stood a vase of white ivory with a dark ellipse; from it, just before the picture was snapped, a garland of artificial flowers and fruit-

AVNER HOLTZMAN, a new contributor, is a professor of Hebrew literature at Tel Aviv University. The present essay was translated from the Hebrew by YONI GARB.



like balls had been removed so as not to block the photographer's view. Another, smaller vase, a work of Polish folk art brought by Hanele's parents from their vacation in Zakopane, served as a napkin holder at the far edge of the table. Additional white cloths were arranged in a container that shows as a dark patch in the center of the picture.

Scattered on the table in the photograph are the wide tea mugs in which the children had been served their drinks. These were part of the family's special dinner service—white with a gold stripe around the edge. The refreshments set out on the table include, to the right of the two vases, a transparent bowl full of oranges—a rare fruit purchased especially for this occasion. Below this, in a flat plate, a large piece of cake is visible, and slightly below that, to the left of the big sugar bowl, is another dish that appears to have contained a collection of dark balls, several of which also repose on individual plates. These were *teigelakh*, dough balls fried in honey, a delicacy of the Lithuanian Jewish kitchen. The plates also hold round cookies with sharp dark edges. It seems the guests were at the height of their feast, or close to the end, when they were asked to assemble for the photograph.

The entire event took place in the family dining

room, its walls covered by wallpaper in a pattern of straight angles effecting a gradual transition from brown to pale beige. A white lace curtain over the window facing the courtyard reflects the light streaming in from outside. Against this background one can distinctly make out the leaves of a plant in an (invisible) vase under the window. On the wall hangs a framed picture of the birthday girl, Hanele, dressed all in white and holding a doll. This is in fact a detail from an earlier photograph of the extended family that the same Yaakov Levine had taken a year before; enlarging it, and presenting it to Hanele's surprised and joyful parents, had been the photographer's own idea.

BUT THE main interest lies in the people gathered for *this* occasion, and their families. Take, for example, on the right edge of the picture, the girl with the folded collar and short, straight hair, lowering her head slightly and casting a bashful glance at the camera. This is Rokhele (Rachel) Kreizer, aged eight, an unassuming, warm-hearted girl from a poor family who was a distant relative of Hanele. Her father, Shlomo Kreizer, short and of hesitant manner with a small mustache, was employed as an accountant at a local grain dealer. Her mother, Bat-

sheva, was, as her Hebrew name connotes, the seventh daughter born in succession to her parents. Rokhele's elder brother, Hershele, born in 1924, was already known in town as a gifted artist.

Next to Rokhele sits her contemporary, Fira (Esther) Kovarski, wearing a wavy collar edged by a thin stripe. Fira's expression is open and radiant, her lips forming a half-smile, her hair slightly free on her forehead. Her whole countenance expresses zest and confidence, mixed with a touch of wonder. By contrast, at the left edge of the picture, one can see Fira's twin sister Lina, in an identical outfit but with her face half-darkened. Owing to a mishap at birth, Lina's face was marred by a disfigured eye. Her solemn and wistful gaze reflects her introverted personality, and perhaps also her feelings of sisterly inferiority. The two girls were the daughters of Benjamin Kovarski, a much-admired doctor, and his beautiful wife Pola, a lady of the world who the previous summer had been the talk of the town as a result of a trip to the World Exhibition in Paris. Although theirs was among the best-off families in Swienciany, everyone knew that Dr. Kovarski would never refuse to pay a house call on a poor patient, and frequently treated people *gratis*.

Behind Fira, third on the right, in a pale dress of which only the edge is visible, stands seven-year-old Rivele (Rebecca) Shootan, casting a pure and delicate glance at the camera. With her large, dark blue eyes, she was declared by many to be the prettiest girl in town. Only two months earlier she had been orphaned by the death of her father, the Yiddish poet Michael Shootan, known by his *nom de plume*, Michael Natish. Shootan's main work, the long poem *Molier Hirsch*, centered on the poor laboring environment in which he had grown up in the interwar years. In addition to Rivele, he left behind his wife Kreina, *née* Ginsburg, a handsome and noble woman.

Next to Rivele, in a checkered dress topped by a sharp pale collar, is Sonia Taraseisky, aged six. Although her expression is mature, the enormous bow in her hair and the remnants of baby fat on her cheeks disclose the tenderness of her years. Second from the left, hands folded on the table, is her exceptionally gifted elder sister Estosha (Esther), her dark eyes fixed with an intelligent, quiet look. The two girls' parents, Valodia and Yetta, owned a large factory for medicinal products that employed dozens of workers, and were the only family in town to have a private automobile with a chauffeur. Thanks to a distant connection with the Svirsksys, the two families frequently spent time together, and a close friendship had grown up between the two sets of

girls. Estosha's special friend was ten-year-old Leyele (Leah), elder sister to the birthday girl, seen here to the left of Sonia in a dark dress with a pale collar, her reddish hair swept back behind her ears, her posture erect and her glance vigorous.

HANELE HERSELF, seated at the head of the table next to her sister, can barely be made out: her small head and closely cropped dark hair almost disappear in the dark dress of her governess. But one can discern her face with its rather babyish expression and a finger of her left hand thrust into her mouth. The white apron was intended to protect her clothes from being stained by fruit and sweets. Her governess, standing behind her in a protective pose and looking at the camera with a frozen smile, is Gita Gurevitch. Then in her thirties, married but childless, she was on duty every morning from the time Hanele was three until she entered school in 1939.

Adjacent to Hanele, in the center of the picture, sits Lovka Pliner, aged nine, in a dark suit with a white collar. His disabled father had received a government license to trade in cigarettes, and his mother also owned a small business—a shop for notebooks, pencils, and other writing utensils. Lovka was the youngest of three brothers, and very popular. Beside him, in a gray woolen dress topped by a star-shaped red collar, sits Mashele (Masha) Baran, aged five, a soft, round-faced girl with light hair. She was the only child of Bronya Baran, who can be seen to her left casting a slightly melancholy glance. Mashele's father Shmuel had deserted wife and child some time before to move in with Yedida Gut, who taught with him in the local Yiddishist school. Among the town gossips, why Baran preferred a clumsy-looking lover to his graceful and pretty wife was a subject of intense speculation.

Bronya Baran's arm hugs the shoulder of Dudik (David) Stein, aged seven. Dudik had lost his father as a small child; his mother Lisa, *née* Levine, was a wide-backed woman, always dressed in black, who managed the flour-and-sugar warehouse she had inherited. Everyone knew that Dudik was the apple of her eye, and that she treated him like a prince. Among the local children he stood out by virtue of his appearance: since infancy he had been dressed only in suits, his shirts carefully ironed, his hair perfectly combed, his shoes brilliantly shined—a real little aristocrat.

Finally, on either side of the seated circle stand the hosts, their faces lit with satisfaction and pleasure. To the right, in a dark, collarless dress, her hair made up, is Rachel Svirsky, to the left her hus-

band Haim. Rachel's family had lived in Swienciany for generations. After studying dentistry at Khar-kow University, she had returned to the town of her birth in 1925 and opened a clinic. In the same year she married Haim Svirsky, born, as his name suggests, in the neighboring town of Svir. Prior to their marriage, Haim had engaged in various occupations, but eventually decided to become a dental assistant. After a year of study in Berlin, he opened a laboratory alongside Rachel's clinic, where he manufactured false teeth and crowns. The couple's partnership proved very profitable, and soon they were able to provide their daughters with all manner of good things.

Secular, non-Zionist Jews imbued with Russian culture and responsive to the new Yiddish literature, the Svirskys were among the founders of the local Yiddishist school, which opened in 1935, and belonged to the Central Yiddish School Organization. Their daughters were especially attached to the amiable and modest Haim; their mother, who spent most of her time in her clinic and refused to permit any disturbance, was rather a figure of awe. At the time the picture was taken the parents were both forty-one.

And a coda: next to Haim, also in a festive suit, stands his widowed father Feivel, then seventy-three. An established householder in Svir, Feivel had fathered five girls and three boys, most of whom had scattered around the world. In Svir, he lived in a large stone house and ran a factory making soft drinks, in which there was also a non-kosher restaurant for the local peasantry.

SOME 7,000 people lived in Swienciany in 1937, half of them Jews and the rest Poles and Lithuanians. The town served as an administrative and economic center for 22 smaller towns and villages in which there dwelled several thousand more Jews. Despite the relatively large size of the local community, the prevailing atmosphere was rather intimate. To be sure, there were the usual splits along social and economic lines and among rival ideological groupings, each with its own party, educational institutions, and youth movement. But beyond the tensions lay a hidden unity, rooted in common lives and in a web of familial ties formed over many generations. Ever since the 15th century, Jews had lived in relative peace in this corner of the world with its wooded hills, small lakes, and fertile soil.

A small stream, the Kunah, ran through the region, and its name is connected with probably the most exciting event to occur in all the years of Swienciany's existence. This was the brief visit paid

by Napoleon on his advance into the heart of Russia in 1812. As the Russian army retreated eastward, it demolished the bridges over the Kunah to hinder the Emperor's forward movement. Napoleon, who arrived toward the end of June, spent the night in a two-story wooden house, reviewing his troops the next morning from the open balcony on the second floor. Ever since then, the building was known as "Napoleon's House," and its photograph could be found on local postcards until World War II, when it was finally destroyed.

As it happens, this entire episode is immortalized—from the Russian point of view—in Leo Tolstoy's great novel *War and Peace*. Describing the events of 1812, Tolstoy shows us the retreat from Swienciany through the eyes and mind of his hero, Nikolai Rostov, commander of a squadron of horsemen:

Rostov remembered Swienciany. The first day he entered the town, he had replaced his quartermaster and had been unable to control all the drunken men who, unbeknownst to him, had stolen five barrels of old whiskey.

For this reason, writes Tolstoy, Swienciany was known throughout the Russian army as the place of the "Drunken Camp," and known also for the extensive acts of pillage committed against the Polish population.

In Jewish history, Swienciany made its mark mainly at the end of the 19th century through the figure of Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines (1839-1915), who later founded the "Mizrahi" movement of religious Zionism. Reines was rabbi of the town from 1869 till 1884, and it was there, in 1881, that he first attempted his bold reform of traditional methods of learning by founding a yeshiva in which Talmud would be studied with the aid of logical principles derived from non-Jewish philosophy, and secular subjects were to be taught alongside religious ones. Harassment by ultra-Orthodox zealots compelled Reines to close the yeshiva within four years and move to the city of Lida, where he resumed his activity on a smaller scale.

By 1937, this chain of events was no doubt long forgotten. Even events closer in time, like the German conquest of the town during World War I, had faded from memory. The children at the birthday gathering were likely thinking of the coming Passover holiday and their recess from school, or possibly already of summer, with its promise of outings to Kochanovka, the nearby lake where one could swim out to a small wooded isle and rest on its banks. The adults, preoccupied with local concerns in their remote corner of Poland, had proba-

bly been unaffected by the anti-Semitic decrees being issued by the government in Warsaw; certainly they had no way of imagining the murderous hostility festering in the hearts of their Lithuanian neighbors and due to break out in full force only a few years hence.

But break out it did. In September 1939, with the onset of war, Swienciany was occupied by the Soviet army, in accordance with the pact drawn up between Hitler and Stalin to divide Poland between them. For a year the political status of the area was unclear. At first it was annexed by Byelorussia, then several months later the Russians bestowed it on the independent state of Lithuania, together with the entire Vilna area—until, in the summer of 1940, the whole of Lithuania was swallowed up by the Soviet Union.

After the uproar of conquest, Swienciany stabilized under Soviet rule, and life returned to a bearable routine. Nevertheless, things had changed unalterably, including for several people in the photograph. Valodia Taraseisky, the father of Sonia and Estosha, had been arrested by the occupiers as a “capitalist” factory owner, and for months he was imprisoned in Swienciany before being expelled to Siberia. Several months later, his wife and daughters were sent to join him in exile. By this means—although they could hardly know it at the time—they escaped the terrible fate that was to befall the rest of their community.

During those still-early days, twelve-year-old Lovka Pliner also succeeded in entering the Soviet Union, together with his two older brothers, who enlisted in the Russian army; Lovka was placed in a military boarding school. Their parents remained in Swienciany.

At the end of June 1940, Haim Svirsky, the father of Hanele and Leah, fell ill with intestinal disease. Because the borders were closed, he could not be taken for treatment to nearby Vilna, let alone to any larger center. After a week of terrible suffering he died at the age of forty-four, on his fifteenth wedding anniversary. His heavily attended funeral was one of the last to take place in the Swienciany community. In retrospect, Haim was fortunate to die in his bed, surrounded by his family, mourned by many, and accorded a proper burial. A concrete marker was placed on his grave, but a tombstone was now beyond his family's means.

ON JUNE 22, 1941, came the surprise Nazi move against Russian-occupied territory. Within a week German forces had entered the town and by July a regime of terror was in place,

inaugurated by a series of executions of Jewish males. These occurred with the active assistance of Lithuanian nationalist forces, known as Partisans, who had come out of hiding with the arrival of the Germans. The town was especially shocked to learn that 100 men had been taken to a nearby forest and there tortured and shot. Among them was Dr. Benjamin Kovarski, father of the twin girls Fira and Lina, who had served as head of the local hospital during the Soviet conquest.

But these events were to pale in comparison with what was on the horizon. On Saturday, September 27, 1941, five days after Rosh Hashanah, the new year of 5702, most of the town's Jewish inhabitants were collected by Lithuanian storm troopers under German command and led on foot in a long column to the nearby town of Novo-Swienciany. Old people and children unable to walk were taken in carts. Toward dusk, after a forced march of eight miles, the column arrived at an abandoned training camp of the Polish army known as “Poligon” (shooting range). There, in the dark, they were packed into huge wooden huts and kept under guard while the inhabitants of seven more towns were added to their number. In all, 8,000 Jews were collected at Poligon and waited in terror for the unknown.

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, arrived, and the residents of Poligon sent a great cry heavenward. Finally, after ten days of waiting, on the festival of Sukkot, the Lithuanians, mostly drunk, began to lead the Jews out in groups to large pits that had been dug at the edge of the camp. The men were separated from the women and children, and all were ordered to undress. Then they were gunned into the open pits. Over the course of two days, all 8,000 were murdered, including more than 3,000 from Swienciany alone. According to the testimony of local inhabitants, many of the victims, especially the children and elderly, were thrown into the pits alive; long afterward their stifled cries could be heard, and rivulets of blood flowed from the pits for days.

Among the victims of Poligon were the shy Rokhele Kreizer, aged twelve, her father Shlomo, and her mother Batsheva. Rokhele's older brother, Hershele the artist, had managed to escape; he would be overtaken by death in the ghetto of Kovno in 1944. The twin daughters of the murdered Dr. Kovarski, the pretty Fira and the sad Lina, were likewise murdered at Poligon, together with their mother Pola; so too was the delicate Riv-ele, together with her mother Kreina. Dudik Stein, by now eleven years old, probably wore one of his

fine suits in the march to Poligon; he was killed together with his mother Lisa, who no doubt, as was her wont, protected him till the last moment. Gita Gurevitch, Hanele Svirsky's governess, also died there, as did the town photographer Yankel Levine, done to death together with his wife and three children.

SOME 500 of the Jews of Swienciany managed to avoid the march to Poligon: their labor had been considered necessary to the occupiers. These were now concentrated in a part of town that had been turned into a small ghetto. To their number were gradually added Jews who had survived from the surrounding communities, until the total swelled to 2,000. Among them, living in unbearable conditions for another year and a half, was Bronya Baran with her ten-year-old daughter Mashele. (Samuel Baran had been murdered at Poligon together with his lover, Yedida Gut.) One day, little Mashele attempted to leave the ghetto by herself and was apprehended in the street and shot.

This was in 1942. In April 1943, the ghetto was liquidated, its inhabitants herded onto a freight train headed south. A few, with ties to the ghetto administration, were dispatched to Vilna and thus received an additional stay of execution. The majority assumed they were being sent to Kovno. Instead, they were brought directly to the killing grounds at Ponar, near Vilna, and murdered on the spot. Bronya Baran was among them. Meanwhile, in a remote town in Kazakhstan, the gifted Estosha Taraseiski, aged fifteen, the daughter of the wealthiest man in town, died of pneumonia complicated by malnutrition.

The fate of Rachel Svirsky and her two daughters, Leah and the birthday girl Hanele, was rather complex. The three had been brought to Poligon with the rest of the community and spent a week there. But, having an inkling of what was about to occur, they bribed one of the Lithuanian guards and escaped two or three days before the mass murder. For a short time they hid in Swienciany at the house of a Polish pharmacist, an old friend; later, they were able to reach the home of Grandfather Feivel in Svir, as yet untouched.

Thus began a long saga made up of constant moves among ghettos, work camps, and concentration camps throughout Lithuania. Grandfather Feivel himself, who remained in Svir, was transferred at the beginning of 1943 to a ghetto in the nearby town of Michalishok where he starved to death at the age of seventy-nine. At the beginning of 1944, the three women found themselves at

Aleksotos, a work camp at the Kovno airfield. Rachel, assisted by her daughter Leah, served there as dentist, and both of them employed every ruse in order to save the eleven-year-old Hanele, who matured before her time in these years of wandering and terror. But on March 27, 1944, Hanele was caught in a children's *Aktion* in the camp. A large dog dragged the fragile girl from under the step where she had been hidden by her mother; she was taken to a large black vehicle, perhaps a gassing van, and was never seen again.

Four months later, Hanele's mother and sister were taken to the Stuthof concentration camp near the Baltic Sea, and from there to the adjoining work camp. When they could no longer endure the exhausting labor of digging and road-building, they asked to be sent back to Stuthof—that is, to certain death. But before their request could be granted, the German forces began to fall apart under the advance of the Red Army. The thousand women still left in the work camp were marched hastily northward, where the intent was to drown them in the Baltic Sea. But the Russians got there first, and in January 1945 they were snatched from the jaws of death.

OF THE sixteen people in the photograph, besides Rachel Svirsky and her daughter Leah, Lovka Pliner and Sonia Taraseiski were also to survive, in both cases after having spent the war years in Russia. Lovka would remain in the Soviet Union, settling in Riga, establishing a family, and becoming a senior officer in the Soviet army. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, he emigrated to the United States, and today lives in Los Angeles. Sonia Taraseiski returned from Russia with her parents at the end of the war, and, after a period in Belgium, likewise emigrated to the United States; today she lives near Boston.

As for the Svirsksys, Rachel, who remarried after the war, came to Israel from Poland in 1956 and passed away eight years later. Her daughter Leah, who preceded her to Israel by six years, married there and raised a family, and today heads the organization of survivors from the Swienciany area.

Every year, during the fall festival of Sukkot, the former inhabitants of Swienciany and the surrounding area gather near the large tombstone established in the cemetery of Kiryat Shaul near Tel Aviv, under which is buried the dust brought in the 60's from the mass grave at Poligon. It is evident from the flow of conversation that the sights and sounds of those days are still very much alive in memory, and that the few survivors of Swienciany

ceaselessly revert to the past. Those who lost their parents, siblings, relatives, and friends are inconsolable to this day. But in recent years more and more members of the younger generation appear at these gatherings, seeking to express their own sense of identification with the burden—and not only the burden, but the happy memories as well—of their parents.

In the summer of 1991, 50 years after Poligon, a large group of survivors and their descendants traveled to Swienciany, walked the route of that last march and held a memorial service near the large earthen structure that covers the mass grave. A new tombstone was erected by the visitors from Israel, stating explicitly in Hebrew and Lithuanian that a key role in the murder had been played by the local populace. Additional services were held near the collective graves of other Jews murdered in the area.

Along with the group ceremonies, Leah Svirsky-Holtzman—my mother—fulfilled a private duty at this gathering. In the old cemetery of Swienciany she located her father Haim's grave and finally erected a proper stone. Her younger sister, my aunt Hanele, is commemorated at the museum of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. There, visitors to the Chil-

dren's Hall encounter, upon entering the room, enlarged photographs of nine boys and girls representing, as drops represent the ocean, their million-and-a-half murdered brothers and sisters. One of the nine, in a white beret, is Hanele Svirsky, aged three, her small image enlarged by the museum's curators from the family photo just as the photographer Yankel Levine had enlarged it 50 years earlier.

Even though the name of Pilsudski Street has since been changed several times, the Svirskys' house at Number 11 still stands, now occupied by another family. In that house, or in another, are very likely kept the elegant cups, the vases, and the utensils seen in the photograph, together with other possessions looted from the abandoned Jewish homes of Swienciany. As for the photograph of the birthday party itself, this, preserved in one of its copies by relatives in Argentina, was returned to my grandmother after the war. It testifies that all who gathered in that house, on that balmy spring day in 1937, once truly existed. For some of them, indeed, and especially for the innocent children among them, the picture may be the only such piece of material evidence—that, and these lines now penned in their memory.

MUSIC

Jazz Masterpieces: A Finale

Terry Teachout

IN 1919, the Swiss musician Ernest Ansermet, who was in London to conduct for Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, took a night off to attend a concert by an American ensemble called the Southern Synco-pated Orchestra. He later wrote an article in praise of the group's featured soloist, a then-unknown clarinetist from New Orleans named Sidney Bechet:

Already, [Bechet's solos] gave the idea of a style, and their form was gripping, abrupt, harsh, with a brusque and pitiless ending like that of Bach's Second Brandenburg Concerto. . . . What a moving thing it is to meet this very black, fat boy with white teeth and that narrow forehead, who is very glad one likes what he does, but who can say nothing of his art, save that he follows his "own way," and then one thinks that this "own way" is perhaps the highway the whole world will swing along tomorrow.

TERRY TEACHOUT, *COMMENTARY's* music critic, is a contributor to *Time* magazine. He worked as a jazz bassist in Kansas City from 1979 to 1983.

Eight decades after Ansermet wrote those astonishingly prescient words, Bechet's ancient 78's have been transferred to digital CD's, and the music he played on that long-ago night in London is known the world over as one of America's outstanding contributions to Western art. Yet jazz is still too young for critics and historians to have formulated a definitive "canon" of major recordings. To that end, I have compiled a list of 65 recorded masterpieces intended to offer a wide-ranging but historically representative sound picture of jazz's first century.

The first two installments, consisting of 45 recordings made between 1923 and 1953, appeared in the November and December 1999 issues of *COMMENTARY*. By way of reminder, here they are again, chronologically and in capsule form:

1923: New Orleans Rhythm Kings, "Tin Roof Blues"; King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, "Dipper Mouth Blues."

1924: Clarence Williams's Blue Five, "Texas Moaner Blues."

1927: Frank Trumbauer and Bix

Beiderbecke, "Singin' the Blues"; Jelly Roll Morton, "The Pearls" and "Wolverine Blues"; Charleston Chasers, "Imagination."

1928: Louis Armstrong and His Hot Five, "West End Blues"; Earl Hines, "Fifty-Seven Varieties."

1930: Duke Ellington Orchestra, "Mood Indigo."

1931: Casa Loma Orchestra, "White Jazz"; Louis Armstrong Orchestra, "Star Dust."

1932: Billy Banks and His Rhythm-makers, "Bugle Call Rag"; Sidney Bechet and His New Orleans Feetwarmers, "Maple Leaf Rag."

1933: Joe Venuti-Eddie Lang Blue Five, "Raggin' the Scale."

1934: Le Quintette du Hot Club de France, "Lady Be Good."

1936: Jimmie Lunceford Orchestra, "Organ Grinder's Swing"; Jones-Smith Incorporated, "Lady Be Good."

1937: Red Norvo Orchestra, "Remember"; Benny Goodman Orchestra, "Down South Camp Meeting"; Fats Waller and His

Rhythm, "Blue, Turning Grey Over You"; Bob Crosby Orchestra, "South Rampart Street Parade."

1938: Teddy Wilson Orchestra, "Jungle Love."

1939: Coleman Hawkins, "Body and Soul."

1940: Benny Goodman Sextet, "Till Tom Special"; Duke Ellington Orchestra, "Ko-Ko"; Chocolate Dandies, "I Can't Believe that You're in Love with Me"; Bud Freeman and His Famous Chicagoans, "Shim-Me-Sha-Wabble."

1941: Artie Shaw Orchestra, "Suite No. 8."

1943: James P. Johnson, "Mule Walk-Stomp."

1944: King Cole Trio, "Easy Listening Blues."

1945: Dizzy Gillespie and His All Stars, "Shaw 'Nuff"; Woody Herman Orchestra, "Your Father's Moustache"; Lester Young, "These Foolish Things."

1946: Charlie Parker Septet, "A Night in Tunisia"; Kenny Clarke and His 52nd Street Boys, "Epistrophe."

1947: Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra, "Manteca."

1948: Thelonious Monk Quartet, "I Mean You"; Benny Goodman Septet, "Stealin' Apples"; Charlie Parker's All-Stars, "Parker's Mood."

1949: Lennie Tristano Sextet, "Wow"; Miles Davis Orchestra, "Israel."

1953: Shorty Rogers and His Giants, "Powder Puff"; Dave Brubeck Quartet, "Stardust"; Gerry Mulligan Quartet, "Five Brothers."

Now for the final twenty items on the list, recorded between 1954 and 1977. During these tempestuous years, jazz penetrated American popular culture to an unprecedented degree, entered an avant-garde

phase from which it emerged as an art music whose audience had shrunk appreciably, then sought once more to engage the public at large by incorporating elements of rock-and-roll.

The list ends at the high-water mark of the popularity of the jazz-rock movement, a time when the common language of jazz appeared to have permanently splintered into a variety of incompatible stylistic dialects, and many critics and musicians were questioning the continuing viability of jazz as a living musical tradition. Following the list, I shall briefly summarize subsequent developments, and then offer some concluding reflections on the place of jazz in the history of Western music.

1954

46. Horace Silver and the Jazz Messengers *Stop Time*

The vogue of such West Coast-based "cool-jazz" players as Dave Brubeck, Gerry Mulligan, and Shorty Rogers (see Nos. 43-45 in the December issue) alienated many East Coast musicians who felt that cool jazz was overintellectualized. Their response was "hard bop," a simplified variant of bebop that emphasized rhythmic directness over compositional sophistication. Together, the drummer Art Blakey (1919-90) and the pianist-composer Horace Silver (1928-) led the first important hard-bop group, the Jazz Messengers, which featured Blakey's explosive solos and Silver's gospel-tinged tunes, of which "Stop Time" is a choice example. Silver would later lead a series of quintets that played his music with irresistible verve; Blakey continued to lead the Jazz Messengers until his death, employing many young players who became noted soloists in their own right, including Keith Jarrett, Wynton Marsalis, and Wayne Shorter.

"Stop Time" is on *Horace Silver and the Jazz Messengers* (Blue Note CDP 7 46140 2).

1955

47. Erroll Garner *It's All Right With Me*

A self-taught pianist unable to read music, Erroll Garner (1921-77) was one of jazz's great primitives, and his extroverted style won him a broad popular following in the 50's and 60's. His twin trademarks—long, bustling solo lines superimposed over the guitar-like "strumming" of his left hand—can be heard to exhilarating effect on this up-tempo version of Cole Porter's tune taped at a California concert.

"It's All Right With Me" is part of *Concert by the Sea*, the best-selling album ever recorded by a jazz pianist (Columbia/Legacy CK-40589).

1956

48. Clifford Brown and Max Roach *Pent-Up House*

Though many early boppers died young or were sidelined by drug use, those who survived continued to deepen and refine their playing throughout the 50's. Among them was the drummer Max Roach (1924-), who played with Charlie Parker in the 40's and subsequently led a quintet together with the trumpeter Clifford Brown (1930-56). The tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins (1930-) joined Brown and Roach in 1955, and their recording of Rollins's "Pent-Up House" shows all three men at the peak of their powers. Brown is bold yet precise, Rollins vibrant and richly elaborate, and Roach caps the performance with one of the "melodic" solos that won him recognition as the most musical of bebop drummers. Three months after "Pent-Up House" was recorded, Brown was killed in a car crash that tragically cut short a career of immeasurable promise.

"Pent-Up House" is on *Sonny Rollins Plus 4* (Prestige/Original Jazz Classics OJCCD-243-2).

49. Art Tatum-Ben Webster
Quartet
All the Things You Are

This performance of a Jerome Kern ballad long favored by jazz musicians for its challenging chord progressions features Art Tatum (1909-56), jazz's greatest virtuoso. Tatum used the stride-piano style of James P. Johnson and Fats Waller (see Nos. 21 and 30 in the December issue) as the basis for a technically elaborate, harmonically subtle style admired by both jazz and classical pianists. Though he usually appeared as an unaccompanied soloist, Tatum's final recording session teamed him with the tenor saxophonist Ben Webster (1909-73), a key soloist in Duke Ellington's early-40's orchestra, whose ripely romantic yet swinging playing proved ideally complementary to the pianist's ornate traceries.

"All the Things You Are" is on *The Tatum Group Masterpieces, Vol. 8* (Pablo 2405-431).

50. Jimmy Giuffrè 3
The Train and the River

Jimmy Giuffrè (1921-), a clarinetist-saxophonist-composer, launched his drummerless trio with its unorthodox instrumentation (it also included guitar and bass, and was modeled after Claude Debussy's *Sonata for Flute, Viola, and Harp*) as a showcase for his quietly inventive playing and folk-flavored compositions. "The Train and the River," a lyrical exercise in jazz impressionism (at one point, the players imitate a train whistle), is one of his most delightful pieces, and an example of West Coast jazz at its freshest. Also heard is Jim Hall (1930-), who played with Giuffrè in the 50's and is now widely regarded as jazz's greatest living guitarist.

"The Train and the River" is on *The Jimmy Giuffrè 3/The Music Man* (Collectors Jazz Classics COL-CD-0248).

1957

51. Miles Davis + 19
My Ship/Miles Ahead

The trumpeter Miles Davis (see Nos. 35 and 42 in the December issue) became a musical trend-setter comparable to Charlie Parker or Louis Armstrong, though his idiosyncratic playing—at once tonally fragile and unforgettably passionate—was less influential than his ability to assemble small groups made up of stylistically disparate yet compatible players. Davis also recorded a memorable series of albums with a studio orchestra led by Gil Evans (1912-88), who wrote for the trumpeter's "Birth of the Cool" band (see No. 42 in the December issue). In this medley of Kurt Weill's "My Ship" and the Davis-Evans composition "Miles Ahead," Evans's subtly blended orchestral sonorities provide exquisite support for Davis, who is heard here on flügelhorn, a larger-bored, warmer-sounding cousin of the trumpet.

"My Ship/Miles Ahead" is on *Miles Ahead* (Columbia/Legacy CK-65121).

52. Count Basie Orchestra
Splanky

Unlike his prewar band, which heavily featured such soloists as the tenor saxophonist Lester Young (see No. 18 in the November issue and No. 34 in December), the orchestra led by William "Count" Basie from 1952 on was first and foremost an arranger's band, albeit one whose robust ensemble playing remains unrivaled to this day. The strongest soloist was Basie himself, and his terse piano style enlivens this medium-tempo blues by Neal Hefti (1922-), an alumnus of Woody Herman's First Herd (see No. 33 in the December issue). Hefti's no-nonsense arrangements were central to Basie's postwar style, of which this is a quintessential example.

"Splanky" is on *The Complete Atomic Basie*, a program of Hefti compositions generally regarded as the

finest of Count Basie's later studio albums (Roulette CDP 7 93273 2).

1958

53. Ahmad Jamal Trio
Ahmad's Blues

Five gifted jazz pianists—Brubeck, Garner, Oscar Peterson, George Shearing, and Ahmad Jamal—"crossed over" to attract large popular audiences in the 50's and early 60's. The most influential was Jamal (1930-), who played show tunes in an airy, harmonically sophisticated style, beautifully accompanied by the veteran bassist Israel Crosby (1919-62) and the drummer Vernel Fournier (1928-). Though many critics dismissed him as a lightweight popularizer, the Basie-like use of space and silence heard in "Ahmad's Blues" would soon become a hallmark of Miles Davis's bands.

"Ahmad's Blues" is the title track of a CD compilation of sixteen live recordings by Jamal's trio (Chess GRD-803).

1959

54. Miles Davis Sextet
So What

By the end of the 50's, a growing number of jazz musicians found the harmonic obstacle courses of late bebop to be overly restrictive. Miles Davis, who had already been experimenting with a less cluttered ensemble style based on Jamal's playing, found its compositional equivalent in "So What," a deceptively simple riff tune in which the four soloists—Davis, the alto saxophonist Julian "Cannonball" Adderley (1928-75), the tenor saxophonist John Coltrane (1926-67), and the pianist Bill Evans (1929-80)—improvise not on regularly repeating harmonic sequences but on two scales located a half-step apart. This freer, more open approach was quickly adopted by younger players, and *Kind of Blue*, the album on which Davis and his soon-to-be-famous sidemen codified the new technique of "modal" improvisation,

became and remained the single most influential album in the history of jazz.

Kind of Blue, which includes "So What," has been in print ever since its original release (Columbia/Legacy CK-52861).

55. Charles Mingus
Fables of Faubus

Jazz composition has always been formally limited—it exists chiefly to stimulate the imagination of the improviser—but Charles Mingus (1922-79), a classically trained bebop bassist, devoted much of his career to composing ambitious pieces in which he adapted Duke Ellington's compositional techniques to a small-group context. Mingus was also one of the first jazz musicians to use his music to make political statements, and "Fables of Faubus," a sardonic, march-like piece whose title refers to Orval Faubus, then the segregationist governor of Arkansas, is a characteristically pungent example of his writing.

"Fables of Faubus" is on *Mingus Ab Um*, which also contains such well-known Mingus compositions as "Better Git It in Your Soul" and "Goodbye, Pork Pie Hat" (Columbia/Legacy CK-66512). Mingus re-recorded it in 1960 as "Original Faubus Fables" with a four-piece group that included the avant-garde multi-instrumentalist Eric Dolphy (plus a set of inflammatory spoken lyrics that Mingus's producers at Columbia had been unwilling to include), but this more vivid version, originally released on the Candid LP *Charles Mingus Presents Charles Mingus*, is currently out of print in the U.S.

56. Ornette Coleman Quartet
Ramblin'

The initial appearance of a true jazz avant-garde dates from the late 50's, when the self-taught alto saxophonist Ornette Coleman (1930-) developed a radically new style of improvisation that dispensed with fixed

harmonic sequences and regular structural periods. Though the peculiarities of Coleman's playing were as much the result of his lack of musical training as of any conscious attempt on his part to innovate, his natural gifts as an improviser allowed him to use his limitations as the basis for the idiom that came to be known as free jazz. "Ramblin'," which is very loosely based on the twelve-bar blues form, demonstrates Coleman's techniques—as well as his deep roots in traditional blues—with singular clarity.

"Ramblin'" is on *Change of the Century* (Atlantic 7 81341-2).

1961

57. Bill Evans Trio
Some Other Time

In 1959, Bill Evans organized a trio in which his sidemen, the bassist Scott LaFaro (1936-61) and the drummer Paul Motian (1931-), abandoned the regular statement of the beat customary among rhythm-section players, instead improvising simultaneously with Evans in an ensemble technique first used by Coleman and Jimmy Giuffrè. Evans's lyrical solos, employing the harmonic language of Debussy, Ravel, and Scriabin, had already put him on the map as a major soloist; the free contrapuntal interplay of his trio, which can be heard in Leonard Bernstein's "Some Other Time," recorded live at New York's Village Vanguard in 1961, definitively established him as the most significant jazz pianist after Bud Powell.

"Some Other Time" is on *Waltz for Debby* (Riverside/Original Jazz Classics OJCCD-210-2).

58. Gerry Mulligan Concert Jazz Band
All About Rosie

Simultaneously with the emergence of modal improvisation and free jazz, several musicians sought to import compositional techniques derived from classical music into a jazz context. Among them was George

Russell (1923-), whose best pieces display a formal control and harmonic complexity comparable to that of modern classical music; in his "All About Rosie" (1957), composition and improvisation are fully integrated, but the results are still jazz of the purest and most swinging kind.

Russell later rescored "All About Rosie" for the Gerry Mulligan Concert Jazz Band, a twelve-piece ensemble in which the baritone saxophonist-composer (see Nos. 42 and 45 in the December issue) attempted to combine the drive and textural variety of a big band with the flexibility of his small groups. This ensemble, featuring the arrangements of Bob Brookmeyer, Al Cohn, and Gary McFarland, was the finest big band of its day.

Gerry Mulligan: Jazz Masters 36 (Verve 314 523 342-2) is an excellent anthology of performances by the Concert Jazz Band, including "All About Rosie."

59. Benny Carter and
His Orchestra
Blue Star

Many major jazz musicians of the swing era were still playing in the 60's and 70's, and some remained at the top of their form well into middle age and beyond. Over time, the differences between their playing and that of the beboppers were subsumed into a lingua franca called mainstream jazz. One of the finest examples of this phenomenon is Benny Carter's suave recording of his own "Blue Star," in which the alto saxophonist-composer (see No. 27 in the December issue) is accompanied by an octet whose other members included the legendary tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins (see Nos. 24 and 27 in the December issue); the second-generation bebop saxophonists Phil Woods and Charlie Rouse; and Jimmy Garrison, John Coltrane's bassist (see below under No. 60).

"Blue Star" is on *Further Definitions* (Impulse IMPD-229).

1964

60. John Coltrane Quartet
Crescent

After *Kind of Blue*, John Coltrane left Miles Davis to lead his own bands, subsequently becoming the preeminent saxophonist of his generation. Coltrane's extended solos, based on the repetition and transformation of short musical motifs, reflected the influence of free jazz, though the playing of his "classic" quartet, which also included the pianist McCoy Tyner (1938-), the bassist Jimmy Garrison (1934-76), and the drummer Elvin Jones (1927-), remained rooted in modal improvisation. "Crescent," a Coltrane original that opens with an incantatory, out-of-tempo recitative followed by a series of solos underpinned by Jones's churning polyrhythms, is a typical example of how the quartet played in the studio (the saxophonist's solos were much longer in public performance).

"Crescent" is the title track of one of the Coltrane Quartet's most popular albums (Impulse IMPD-200).

1965

61. Miles Davis Quintet
Footprints

The quintet that Miles Davis led from 1965 to 1968 was less notable for his own playing—marvelous though it was—than for the contributions of his younger sidemen. The tenor saxophonist-composer Wayne Shorter (1933-) wrote many of the striking compositions performed by the group, while the pianist Herbie Hancock (1940-), the bassist Ron Carter (1937-), and the drummer Tony Williams (1945-97) forged a startlingly flexible ensemble style that took the innovations of the Bill Evans Trio several steps further. "Footsteps," a haunting Shorter blues in 6/4 time, shows how the Davis quintet deconstructed the elements of bebop and modal improvisation into an abstract yet accessible style whose echoes con-

tinue to be heard in contemporary small-group jazz playing.

"Footprints" is on *Miles Smiles* (Columbia/Legacy CK-65682).

1970

62. Gary Burton and Keith Jarrett
Moonchild/In Your Quiet Place

Starting in the late 60's, many younger jazz musicians incorporated aspects of rock and other styles of popular music into their playing. In 1967, Gary Burton (1943-), a lyrical yet virtuosic vibraphonist who had previously worked as a country-and-western session player in Nashville, formed a quartet whose imaginative recordings were among the earliest examples of this amalgam; three years later, he recorded with the pianist Keith Jarrett (1945-), whose equally virtuosic playing reflected a comparably wide variety of interests, including gospel music. "Moonchild/In Your Quiet Place," a graceful ballad by Jarrett, synthesizes these diverse influences with exceptional assurance. Burton pursued a broadly similar approach in his later quartets and quintets, while Jarrett, following a brief stint with Miles Davis, established himself as a hugely (and deservedly) popular solo artist, alternating between jazz of various kinds and classical music.

"Moonchild/In Your Quiet Place" is on *Gary Burton & Keith Jarrett* (Rhino R2-71594).

1972

63. Stan Getz
500 Miles High

Miles Davis added electric instruments to his band in 1969 and adopted the rock-influenced style soon to be known as fusion jazz; several Davis alumni then started similar groups of their own, and a handful of older musicians also began experimenting with fusion. One of them was the tenor saxophonist Stan Getz (1927-91), a Lester Young disciple who developed into a highly individual soloist in his own right.

Getz had long been interested in new musical styles—he was one of the first American musicians to explore the Brazilian idiom called bossa nova—and in 1972 he hired the pianist-composer Chick Corea (1941-), who had previously worked for Davis, and put together a quintet to perform Corea's Latin-style compositions, including the surging "500 Miles High." Corea played electric piano with the group, which also included Tony Williams on drums and the Brazilian percussionist Airto Moreira (1941-). Corea and Moreira later left Getz to form Return to Forever, one of the best-known fusion bands of the 70's.

"500 Miles High" is on *Captain Marvel* (Koch Jazz KOC-CD-7864).

1974

64. Modern Jazz Quartet
Django

Except for Getz and Davis, most older jazz musicians shunned fusion, continuing to work in more traditional styles. A case in point was the Modern Jazz Quartet, the longest-lived small group in jazz, which was playing even better in 1974 than it had been twenty years earlier. Led by the pianist-composer John Lewis (1920-), the MJQ, as the group was known, sought to bring compositional rigor to bebop, using Lewis's elegant, classically influenced pieces as vehicles for the billowing vibraphone solos of Milt Jackson (1923-99). "Django," a swinging minor-key lament written in memory of Django Reinhardt (see No. 16 in the November issue), is Lewis's most popular composition, and this lively version, recorded at a 1974 Lincoln Center concert, captures the MJQ at something close to its best.

"Django" is on *The Complete Last Concert*, together with other noteworthy Lewis compositions such as "The Golden Striker" and "Skating in Central Park" (Atlantic 61976-2, two CD's). An even better version can be heard on the 1960 album *European Concert*, currently out of print in the U.S.

1977
65. Weather Report
Birdland

Fusion was in part a response to the proliferating complexity of avant-garde jazz, which many musicians believed was further alienating the fast-shrinking audience of jazz fans. As a result, many of the Miles Davis alumni who started groups of their own chose to play in an overtly popular style (though not Keith Jarrett or Davis himself, whose brand of "fusion" was actually less accessible than his earlier work). They included Wayne Shorter and the pianist-composer Joe Zawinul (1932-), who left Davis to start Weather Report, a group whose synthesizer-dominated albums had a strong rock flavor; indeed, the catchy melody and high-stepping beat of Zawinul's "Birdland" actually gave it a brief run on the pop-music charts, though the heavily overdubbed instrumental textures are far from simple-minded.

This Is Jazz: Weather Report (Columbia/Legacy CK-64627) contains "Birdland" and eight other performances by Weather Report.

Afterthoughts

As it happens, the jazz musicians who wholeheartedly embraced fusion could hold on to their popular audiences only by watering down their music to the point of vapidness; though most of the more blatant popularizers eventually backtracked, their later work lacked the focus and concentration that had originally brought them fame. But jazz itself had entered a period of drift and uncertainty by the late 70's, and the failure of fusion to thrive was but one symptom of this malaise.

Jazz has always been stylistically diverse. Still, at any given moment it has tended to be dominated by a single prevailing style (Dixieland, big-band swing, small-group bebop) as well as by a style-setting giant (Armstrong, Parker, Davis). Moreover, all varieties of jazz prior to

1960 shared a common musical vocabulary that succeeded over time in assimilating such seemingly incompatible idioms as bebop and bossa nova, thus making it possible for Stan Getz to record with Chick Corea, or Benny Goodman with Wardell Gray and Fats Navarro.

But the rise of free jazz and abstract modal improvisation led to a rupture in the ongoing jazz tradition, and soon thereafter to what the critic Max Harrison would describe in 1980 as "a postmodernist phase: all styles, the music of all periods, are, it seems, valid . . . jazz no longer has a lingua franca." In practice, older mainstream players stopped trying to assimilate post-Coltrane developments, while avant-gardists showed little interest in earlier kinds of jazz; at the same time, listeners began to turn away in large numbers, preferring newer, less demanding styles of popular music.

This latter development led many observers to speculate about the possible death of jazz. As Warren Leight wrote in the last scene of *Side Man*, his eloquent play about a group of aging jazz musicians:

These guys are not even an endangered species anymore. It's too late. There are no more big bands, no more territory bands. No more nonets, or tentets. No more 60 weeks a year on the road. . . . When they go, that'll be it. No one will even understand what they were doing. A 50-year blip on the screen.

But these words, imagined to have been spoken in 1985, have proved premature. What happened instead was that jazz entered a long-overdue neoclassical phase. A new generation of players, many of them following the example of the trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, chose to embrace earlier, more immediately accessible styles, and the jazz repertory movement, in which big bands perform the music of composers like Duke Ellington in the same way that a symphony orchestra plays

Mozart or Stravinsky, simultaneously began to attract the attention of established arts institutions. In New York, for example, both Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall now sponsor publicly funded jazz repertory programs.

It remains to be seen whether neoclassicism—especially the fundamentally derivative kind practiced by Marsalis and his followers—can supply sufficient creative energy to sustain jazz's living tradition, or to inspire new "master innovators" (in Harrison's phrase). Certainly no such figure has emerged since the death of John Coltrane. But with the decline of interest in free jazz and fusion—a phenomenon not dissimilar to the simultaneous demise of the classical-music avant-garde—it appears possible that the mainstream style, with its unparalleled capacity for assimilation, is now in the process of reasserting its primacy as the lingua franca of jazz.

WHATEVER THE future brings, the invention, efflorescence, and maturing of jazz remain one of the most remarkable cultural phenomena of the century just past. And thanks to the timely invention of the phonograph, the music of Armstrong, Ellington, Parker, Coltrane and their contemporaries, which would otherwise have been lost, has instead been preserved for all time. But does their music *deserve* to be so preserved? Is it, in other words, of permanent interest, like the music of Mozart and Stravinsky?

The question is begged by the increasing tendency of journalists and musicians to refer to jazz as "America's classical music," a phrase coined by the critic Grover Sales. The words are not without meaning—they properly emphasize the fact that jazz, unlike classical music, is indigenous to America—but their effect on critical discourse has nevertheless been mischievous. For one thing, America already has a classical music of its own—the music of such composers as Samuel Barber,

Aaron Copland, and Charles Ives—and to praise jazz at the expense of these composers' achievements is tendentious at best, invidious at worst. Moreover, the phrase completely slights the large body of American popular song composed in this century, whose claim on our attention is at least as substantial as that of jazz.

Beyond this, it seems to me self-evident that in any direct comparison between the two musics, jazz must necessarily come up short. The Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm, who has (surprisingly enough) written penetratingly about jazz, discussed this problem in his 1959 book, *The Jazz Scene*:

Jazz is little music and not big music, in the same sense as lyrics are little poetry and epics big poetry. . . . Limitation of scope and relative smallness of scale do not make an art less good or true or beautiful. They do, however, put certain artistic achievements out of its reach. . . . If we ask: has jazz produced anything like the Beethoven Ninth, or the Bach B-Minor Mass, or *Don Giovanni*, the answer must be a flat no.

But it is no less evident that within its admittedly narrow compass, jazz at its best is one of the most expressive forms of music that Western culture has yet produced. And

while comparisons with classical music must be made with extreme caution, surely it is safe to say that such recordings as "West End Blues," "Ko-Ko," or "Parker's Mood" embody the profoundest of human emotions no less truly than a Schubert song or a Chopin nocturne. I therefore feel secure in predicting that the recorded masterpieces of jazz's first century—many of which are to be found in this list—will continue to be heard and enjoyed so long as music itself retains its hold on our hearts and minds.

All of the CD's mentioned in this article can be purchased on line at www.commentarymagazine.com.

ART

The Monotony of "Sensation"

Steven C. Munson

THE SCANDAL over *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection*,* on exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, has now run its course. It was provoked, as anyone with access to a newspaper in the past several months could have learned, by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's decision to halt municipal subsidies to the museum after it refused his request that it desist from showing a painting called *The Holy Virgin Mary*.

STEVEN C. MUNSON, whose recent contributions to COMMENTARY include articles on Alfred Stieglitz, Mary Cassatt, and Picasso, is an artist living in Washington, D.C.

The mayor objected to the inclusion of this painting, which is composed in part of clippings from pornographic magazines and elephant dung, on the grounds that it was blasphemous. He further argued that since the painting was an outrageous insult to the city's Roman Catholics, and since the venue for its exhibition was supported in good part by taxpayer dollars, he had both the right and the duty either to stop its display or to withdraw city funding. Needless to say, the director and the board of trustees of the Brooklyn Museum disagreed. They claimed an exclusive right under the First Amendment to

decide what would be shown under their auspices. When both sides went to court, this argument carried the day.

In making their case, museum officials sought to drum up support by mounting an all-out public-relations campaign in the press. Over the course of several weeks, numerous articles, profiles, interviews, editorials, and op-ed pieces appeared that revealed a good deal—probably more than the museum's leaders intended—about their understand-

* The exhibit, which opened October 2 and closes January 9, had earlier appeared in Berlin (September 30, 1998–February 21, 1999) and London (September 18–December 28, 1997).

ing of their role and about current attitudes within the art world.

Perhaps the most salient fact to emerge was that the decision to put on *Sensation* was in no way motivated by considerations of aesthetic value. As the *New York Times* reported, the battle with the mayor had less to do with "artistic preferences" than "with extracting Brooklyn's cultural scene from the long-dominant shadow of Manhattan." According to the *Times*, several of the museum's board members had "made a strategic decision to align Brooklyn's cultural institutions with the avant-garde" in order "to attract a young, hip, ethnically diverse audience with a taste for cutting-edge art." And once Giuliani objected, reported the *Times*, many of the trustees seemed positively to relish a court fight, exuding a "giddy confidence" that they would prevail and that "it will have been a price well worth paying if one result of the controversy is that the Brooklyn Museum of Art is branded in the consciousness of New York City as a pretty cool place to hang out."

WHETHER BROOKLYN will ever be as "cool" as Manhattan is hard to say. But that the board of trustees of a distinguished art museum has now publicly acknowledged that its first priority is getting in step with social fashion is certainly a significant development. No less remarkable is the single-minded determination with which both the board and Arnold Lehman, the man it chose as the museum's director, have set about realizing that goal. To achieve it, they have shown that they are willing to put at risk both a substantial part of the museum's funding and its good name. If the courts run true to form and the city loses on appeal, the Brooklyn Museum of Art will get to keep its subsidies. Whether its reputation survives intact is another matter.

Part of the damage the scandal has already done is to expose the highly unusual arrangements that

were made by Lehman to bring off the *Sensation* exhibit in the first place. All of the works in the show belong to Charles Saatchi, a British advertising mogul. According to the *Times*, he made undisclosed payments to the museum to help defray the cost of the exhibit. Money was also solicited from art dealers and from one of New York's leading auction houses, businesses with an interest in seeing the monetary value of either the particular works owned by Saatchi or other works by *Sensation* artists inflated by the fall-out from a big museum show. Museum officials, the *Times* reported, were instructed by Lehman to keep secret some of the key details of these financing deals.

And apparently for good reason. About six weeks after the exhibit opened, reported the *Times*, the auction house in question put several works by Damien Hirst, the most prominent artist represented in *Sensation*, on the block. One—a medicine cabinet filled with old drug bottles—set a record for the artist, selling for \$354,500, some 30 percent more than what it had fetched in 1998. Three other pieces also did exceptionally well. A steel cage filled with formaldehyde containers, masks, gloves, and a syringe went for \$178,500—25 percent more than its estimate the previous year, when it failed to sell. A wall of 100 dead fish floating in individual glass blocks filled with formaldehyde, which had also failed to sell in 1998, "soared above its high estimate," in the words of the *Times*, going for \$277,500. And a photographic self-portrait of a youthful Damien Hirst with a severed human head sold for \$74,000, more than double its high estimate.

In conveying these facts, the *Times* opined that it was "hard to say" whether the auction house's \$50,000 "investment [in *Sensation*] paid off." Art buyers may form a different opinion about how works such as these come to command such high prices. In any case, just

how irregular Mr. Lehman's actions were in this matter is an issue that will no doubt be addressed, if indeed it is not already being addressed, by the board that hired him. Until then, the art-going public will have yet another reason to wonder about the true purposes of the museum's exhibits of contemporary art.

As IT is, those purposes seem to have to do with everything—from making money to playing hardball politics with a Republican mayor to alleviating a sense of social inferiority—*except* providing the kind of experience one usually associates with looking at works of art. This was certainly the suggestion one got from the museum's own presentation of the exhibit, which included an elaborately ironic "warning" that some of the objects on display might cause vomiting or fainting. Any doubts on this score were dispelled by the recorded message that greeted those ordering tickets over the phone.

According to that message, the 100 works by the 42 artists represented in *Sensation*

offer a dark, satirical, unflinching view of the contemporary world. They investigate our culture's most pressing problems and most persistent obsessions: sex, violence, death and disease, class, race, and gender, normalcy and deviancy, and the definition of art itself.

Together, the recording concluded, these works "comprise the most widely discussed art of the last decade."

This sort of hype is, of course, familiar: it is the staple of the huckster and an omnipresent part of our mass culture. If there was a false note in this jaunty little promo, it was the unstated but unmistakable claim that the art in *Sensation* is somehow unique. It is not. In fact, at the same time that *Sensation* was running at the Brooklyn Museum, another exhibit, *Regarding Beauty: A View of the*

Late Twentieth Century, was on view at the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D.C. (October 7 to January 17). Apart from differences in tone and technical quality, the two had a lot in common.

In both cases, the most recently produced works—whether paintings, sculptures, photographs, or installations—were largely derivative of the pop, conceptual, minimalist, and neo-realist movements that first emerged in the 1960's and that have undergone several recyclings since then. Both exhibits contained works that seek, in one way or another, to simulate nature; or that are based on the products of popular culture and everyday life; or that are intended, so we were informed, to make some kind of statement. Many of these visual statements have to do with the vanity or futility of art. Others have to do with the meaninglessness or absurdity of life, or with troubled personal relationships, or with specific social concerns, like housing for the poor or the need to protect the environment. But in all of this apparent variety there was nothing that could be said to represent new art.

Consider, for example, the painting that caused Mayor Giuliani to put his foot down, *The Holy Virgin Mary* by Cris Ofili. What caused the commotion was not Ofili's cartoonish drawing or use of glitter and nearly indiscernible pornographic cut-outs: these are characteristic features of contemporary picture-making. The supposed "novelty" of this work, and what got the mayor so riled up, was the application of elephant dung to the surface of the painting.

Yet far from being, as the *Times* put it, "avant-garde," the use of such excretions in the creation of art objects is old hat. To cite just one example: in 1961, Piero Manzoni, one of the early practitioners of conceptual art, presented *Merda d'artista*, a work in which cans of his own excrement were priced for sale according to weight. By the same to-

ken, when Andres Serrano created a flap in 1987 by putting a crucifix in a jar of his own urine and calling it *Piss Christ*, he was hardly breaking new ground. In the late 1970's, Andy Warhol, one of the preeminent leaders of the pop art movement, began a series of pictures—known as the "piss paintings"—in which canvases were coated with metallic copper paint, spread on the floor, and urinated on. One of these, *Oxidation Painting* (1978), was in *Regarding Beauty*, and the most the catalogue writers could think to say for it was that it asserts "that beauty is a fallacy, a surface quality that is only 'skin deep.'" The paltriness of such judgments suggests that, in the absence of a provocative title or explanation of the "shocking" manner in which they have been produced, such works would arouse little interest outside the art world.

Even for those within that world, the interest these works hold seems highly problematic. On the one hand, there is the wish to assert that they are genuinely significant works of art. On the other hand, there is the tendency to identify that significance as ultimately lying outside the works themselves, in the various external realities—social, cultural, or personal—that the works are said to refer to. The one reality that seems to have little relevance in all this—apart from the seemingly endless recitation of all the oddball materials the artists use—is the aesthetic. Indeed, once the works in question are fully "explained," they begin to seem less and less like art and more and more like commentary by other means.

Which raises the question: is something that elicits no response beyond mild curiosity or revulsion, that is so aesthetically unsatisfying that it has to be named or explained in order to acquire some kind of "meaning," really a work of art? Although this issue received no real attention in all that was written about the *Sensation* controversy, it is critical to understanding the true

nature of the objects on display and whether, or to what extent, they fall within what the promo called "the definition of art itself."

IN THIS regard, it is worth considering how a collector very different from Charles Saatchi, the progressive physician, entrepreneur, and polymath Albert Barnes (1872-1951), who possessed an almost unrivaled eye for quality, installed the works he purchased for the Barnes Foundation in Merion, Pennsylvania. Here is how Henri Matisse, after visiting the United States, described it in a 1930 interview:

One of the most striking things in America is the Barnes collection, which is exhibited in a spirit very beneficial for the formation of American artists. There the old master paintings are put beside the modern ones, a Drouanier Rousseau next to a primitive, and this bringing together helps students understand a lot of things that the academies don't teach.

Barnes's purpose in arranging his collection in this way—without the sort of lengthy explanatory wall texts that nowadays clutter up so many exhibits—was to focus the attention of students and visitors on the experience of looking at the works themselves, and on the value of seeing the interrelationships of form among art objects from diverse historical periods and locales. As a 1993 catalogue put it, he was interested in "the way an artist uses color, light, line, and space . . . in relationship to each other, fused by the artist's own uniquely personal perceptions of . . . form." But this was not formalism. "What Barnes sought to convey in front of the painting itself," the catalogue continued, "was a means of sorting out the varieties of human experience embodied in a painting."

And the trustees of the Brooklyn Museum? When they got their first look at *The Holy Virgin Mary*, they almost all agreed (according to the *Times*) that it was "beautiful." But

what they surely meant was that it was pretty. And, indeed, many things in the world are pretty, but that does not make them art.

Most of the paintings in *Sensation* and *Regarding Beauty* are not much to look at—some, of course, are much worse than others—nor do they reward a sustained effort at seeing. The same can be said of other works, such as, from the Hirshhorn, Charles Ray's mannequin in a red dress, *Fall '91*, or Louise Bourgeois's *Mamelles*, a succession of pink rubber breasts; or, from Brooklyn, Jake and Dinos Chapman's *Zygotic acceleration, biogenetic, de-sublimated libidinal model*, a group of fiberglass mutant girl figures wearing running shoes and having penises for noses and anuses for mouths, or Sarah Lucas's *Au Naturel*, a mattress on which are arranged a bucket, two melons, and a cucumber between two oranges.

Nor is there much in these works to sort out in terms of "the varieties of human experience." This is particularly evident in *Sensation*, and part of the reason, no doubt, is the very limited way certain themes—namely, death, mutilation, and dismemberment—have been treated by the artists. They seem to have been deployed to one end only: the evocation of some distasteful sentiment. While those who made the works are clearly fascinated by the more lurid aspects of death, and keenly attuned to their commercial appeal, they seem no more capable of treating this theme thoughtfully than they are of recognizing the aesthetic—which is to say moral—responsibilities of the artist.

IN PONDERING this failure, it is useful to reflect on one's own experiences with the dead or dying, subjects that have, after all, been the inspiration for much great art. When I was in college, for example, I once went with a friend to visit his father, a doctor who was the head of the pathology department at a large metropolitan hospital. Arriving at

his office, we were told he was working in the basement. We found him in a small gray room, bent over a sort of operating table. Next to him, lying face up in what looked like a long deep sink, was the body of a five-year-old boy. His torso had been cut open and several of his internal organs removed. My friend's father beckoned us over to the table, where he had been busy examining the boy's heart. It had, he explained, a congenital defect, which, with cold-blooded avidity, he helpfully pointed out to us.

I do not remember what I learned that day about the workings of the human heart. But I do remember looking at the body of that dead child—chest open, eyes open, the former engine of his life now prodded to explain itself on a table some distance away—and being impressed by its powerlessness (powerless in life as well as death). I also remember thinking that seeing him like that was an indignity to him. Perhaps in his case an autopsy had been necessary—and certainly, from the pathologist's perspective, this had been just another day's work. But such considerations have never altered the nagging feeling I had that there was something wrong with making the boy's dissected body available for display to casual visitors.

The experience of seeing an autopsy is quite different from the experience of looking at a painting of an autopsy. Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* (1632) does not induce a desire to faint, or a sense of uneasiness that in some way one may be dishonoring the deceased. On the contrary, one of the fascinating aspects of this painting is that the dead body it depicts seems just as "alive" as the half-dozen or so figures grouped around it.

In his 1990 study, *Rembrandt*, Emmanuel Starcky, a curator at the Louvre, recalls the reaction of the 19th-century painter and critic Eugène Fromentin:

Fromentin disliked this picture,

criticizing the corpse, which he saw as no more than "a pale lighting effect in a black picture." He concludes his case thus: "Rembrandt's subject was a man, he was not concerned with the human form; his subject was death, and he overlooked it in order to search his palette for a whitish tone representing light."

Fromentin was partly right: Rembrandt did put his aesthetic goals first, above any interest in trying to imitate—or reproduce—nature. As a result, however, he was able to infuse his work with his own interpretations of those "varieties of human experience"—including death—to which we as viewers can respond.

Starcky writes that "throughout his career, Rembrandt explored in paintings and drawings the links between man and death, but it would be man's struggle, not his capitulation, to which he would draw our attention." Two of the pictures Starcky has in mind are *Christ on the Cross* (1631) and *The Suicide of Lucretia* (1666). But perhaps the most remarkable of Rembrandt's works on this theme does not have a human subject. *The Slaughtered Ox* (1655) depicts, with utterly stark simplicity, the beast strung up and carved open, suffused in death with the extraordinary power and dignity it had in life. It is little wonder that this picture was later copied by painters as various as Eugène Delacroix and Chaim Soutine; it is one of the most inspiring in the history of art.

Amid the to-do over Damien Hirst's cut-up cows in formaldehyde, a piece entitled *Some Comfort Gained from the Acceptance of the Inherent Lies in Everything*, it is difficult not to think of the majesty of *The Slaughtered Ox*. In this masterwork, whose compressed tension becomes an emanation of beauty and sensation, Rembrandt painted what might be called, even though his subject was an animal, the humanity of death. By contrast—and the contrast could not be greater—Hirst's conceptual work embodies

nothing to which a viewer can really respond. It can only be "read" as the solipsistic expression of a clichéd cynicism or an inhumane psychological impulse. Like much else in *Sensation* and *Regarding Beauty*, it seeks to collapse the distinction between art and nature, and ends up violating both.

Contrary to the extravagant and truly ill-considered claims of the curators that this sort of thing represents a return to the tradition of realism in art, as exemplified by Goya, Courbet, and Manet, such works actually have an entirely unreal quality about them—they belong more to the realm of special effects than of art—that recalls the excesses of the surrealist Salvador Dalí or Marcel Duchamp's now-ancient "readymades" (like the urinal he bought and presented as *Fountain*). Moreover, despite all the fancy talk about infusing the formalist varieties of minimalism and conceptualism with reality-based social content, these works are profoundly antisocial in nature. Objects with such titles as *Spaceshit*; *Popcorn Tits*; *Wrecked*; *Dudley*; *Like What You See? Then Call Me*; *Everyone I Have Ever Slept with 1963-1995*; *Beautiful Kiss My Fucking Ass Painting*; and *Bullet Hole* are clearly not intended to engage the viewer in a serious experience of the visual pleasures or peculiar mental satisfactions that genuine art provides. Nor can they be said to represent, as the curators insist, "the art of ideas with a high visual impact." On the contrary, they are a form of assault—on art, on the life of the mind, and on the human spirit.

TO THE curators, the "transgressive-ness" of these works is their chief virtue, although, perhaps uncertain about how intrinsically valuable the works really are, they also seem to want to make them more palatable by attaching them, like barnacles, to

the freighter of political correctness. What such a strategy cannot mask or alter, however, is the fundamentally sociopathic nature of this art—the thing about it that led Mayor Giuliani to label it "sick stuff." For that is a direct result of its creators' shunning of aesthetic values, in particular the values of 20th-century modernism.

As the *Sensation* catalogue candidly acknowledges, it was precisely the rejection of modernism that laid the foundation for the eventual emergence of Hirst, *et al.*:

Behind the achievements of today's young artists are 30 years of solid acclaim for many aspects of British art, particularly since the general removal of modernist sightlines abroad has allowed for a more liberal climate of appreciation.

But once those "sightlines" were abandoned in favor of the now-dominant aesthetic of "anything goes," respect for the artistic enterprise itself, and appreciation for the discipline and other rigors it demands, also went by the board. That respect and that appreciation are among the things that once anchored artists to a tradition, and made it possible for genuinely significant new art to develop. They were at the heart of the modernists' struggle, a struggle that was at first fiercely resisted and that entailed the demand that we, too, make the requisite effort, however difficult or time-consuming, to appreciate and understand what those artists were trying to accomplish.

By contrast, contemporary artists like those represented in *Sensation* make no such demands, either of themselves or of us. As the catalogue says, they "made art as they would make any other lifestyle choice," and "they found, too, that they did not have to fight or skirt around an un-

sympathetic regime." Almost by definition, their work, which has basically gone straight from the art schools into galleries and museums and private collections, cannot be, as it is so frequently described, "challenging." As one contemporary-art dealer in London put it: "It's very accessible art. . . . You can look at the title and the piece and understand what they're doing and summarize it in one sentence. . . . It's not going to alienate a general public." And little wonder: 40 years of postmodernism have by now all but obliterated the distinction between art and kitsch.

The kind of unhappy era in which we find ourselves today is not entirely without precedent. It was described by Wassily Kandinsky, the great Russian abstract painter, in his 1914 book *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*:

At such a time art ministers to lower needs, and is used for material ends. . . . Objects, the reproduction of which is considered [art's] sole aim, remain monotonously the same. The question "what?" disappears from art; only the question "how" remains. By what method are these material objects to be reproduced? . . . [T]he artist in such times has no need to say much, but only to be notorious for some small originality and consequently lauded by a small group of patrons and connoisseurs (which incidentally is also a very profitable business for him). . . . In each artistic circle are thousands of such artists, of whom the majority seek only for some new technical manner.

Of such times, Kandinsky said that "Art has lost her soul." It is hard to think of a more apt description of our present condition, or a more persuasive demonstration of it than the art in *Sensation*.

Books in Review

Creative Destruction?

One Nation, Two Cultures: A Moral Divide

by Gertrude Himmelfarb

Knopf. 192 pp. \$23.00

Reviewed by
Paul Johnson

OF ALL those who write about the moral condition of America, Gertrude Himmelfarb is the best—partly because she is a historian, able to dip into deep reserves of knowledge to bring up parallels and precedents; partly because she has a strong taste for hard evidence and makes impressive use of statistics; partly because she is cool-headed and refuses to become hysterical about the awfulness of things; and finally because she writes well and succinctly.

In this 190-page essay, Himmelfarb covers a lot of ground: the moral consequences of capitalism, the diseases of democracy, civil society, the

family and its enemies, the problems of legislating morality, religion as a political institution, and, especially, America's two cultures—the one hedonistic, the other puritanical—and the “ethics gap” between them. Anyone who is genuinely concerned about America's plight, or merely wants to talk about it, has no excuse for not reading this book. Himmelfarb has done the work, absorbed the evidence, marshaled the arguments, and produced, with modesty and sense, some tentative conclusions.

What, then, is to blame for the confused moral state of contemporary America, and in particular for everything summed up by the phrase, “the permissive society”? In a way, as Himmelfarb says, it is capitalism. The roots of the phenomenon lie not in the 1960's, when the shoots appeared above the surface, but in the 1950's, the supposedly stuffy Eisenhower years when American capitalism really went to work to create a consumer society.

A century earlier, John Stuart Mill had warned that a “progressive economy” was conducive to materialism and hedonism; in order to restrain this process, Mill wanted to

keep the economy in “a stationary state.” Much closer to our time, the Austrian-born American economist Joseph Schumpeter argued that capitalism, being simultaneously creative of wealth and destructive of society, would destroy itself, too, in the end. He was wrong about that, but right about capitalism's propensities. As Daniel Bell pointed out 25 years ago, capitalism contains cultural contradictions: it demands self-discipline and deferred satisfaction in order to function at all, but in the process of expanding stimulates a self-indulgence that is impatient of all restraints.

I think it would help to understand this process better if we abandoned the word “capitalism,” or at least ceased to see it as an ideology, or “ism,” deliberately created by man in the same way as Communism. Capitalism is something that, unless you act drastically to stop it, occurs quite naturally at a certain point in human development. The human brain, a feverish force in itself, ceaselessly seeks—and finds—novelty, and the way we run business is merely one expression of this restless fecundity. Given human intelligence, there

PAUL JOHNSON is the author of *A History of the American People*, *Modern Times*, and *The Birth of the Modern*, among many other books.

can be no such thing as stasis in any area where humans have the power to change things.

The strength of capitalism is that it is continually transforming itself, absorbing lessons, overcoming difficulties, and setting ever-more ambitious objectives. But in so doing, it reflects a human dynamism that is destructive of the status quo in every field of activity—politics, religion, morals, and values no less than economic arrangements. The same dynamic pursuit of “progress” transformed medieval art into the art of Raphael, Michelangelo, and Leonardo, and then in due course destroyed the culture of high art in the early 20th century. A religious Great Awakening will be followed by an equally feverish and determined pursuit of sensual satisfaction, in the next generation or the one after.

America, being a society founded virtually from nothing in the early 17th century, was able, when the techniques became available, to embrace industrial capitalism unhampered by the restraints of a long past and with a wholeheartedness that Europe and Japan cannot muster even today. That is why America is the global engine of enterprise and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future. Seen from a European viewpoint, America is a society of excess or extremes—excessive both in its puritanism and in its libertinism. No European society would have embarked on the hazardous frontal assault of Prohibition, or the current attempt, by law and public pressure, to stamp out smoking. But no European society could have created Hollywood, in all its evil manifestations.

Wall Street, Disneyland, political correctness, Star Wars: these are seen by many Europeans as manifestations of the American propensity to push things farther and faster than desirable—even though the Europeans do tend lamely to follow the U.S. example in the end. Europeans were amazed equally by Ronald Reagan’s religiosity and Bill

Clinton’s moral squalor, shocked both by Kenneth Starr’s prosecution strategy and by the baffling way it failed to dent Clinton’s poll ratings. They are appalled at the periodic mass-killings by maniacs running amok with firearms, and shaken—or say they are shaken—by the number of Americans executed for murder.

IN SHORT, America is a revolutionary country, albeit one that, in a rich paradox, is remarkable for nothing so much as the stability of its political system, which has survived more than two centuries of astonishing growth and change and one of the fiercest civil wars in history. America was settled by the revolutionary desire to break away from the corruptions of Europe, and it created the built-in revolutionary dynamism of the world’s largest economy. In the last half-century, as Himmelfarb points out, it has also created a revolutionary counterculture, one aspect of a cultural revolution that itself embraces a racial revolution, a sexual revolution, a

welfare revolution, a revolution of political protest, a psychological revolution—also known as the “cult of narcissism”—not to speak of a technological revolution beginning with mass TV and continuing into the Internet and countless other manifestations of rapid change in the way we communicate.

In these circumstances, culture wars are inevitable. It could even be argued that America has *always* had culture wars, at least since Roger Williams broke away from Massachusetts to found a new state. Initially, America’s vast size and space, and the ever-moving frontier, made it easy to accommodate such wars. Now they tend to become battles of attrition. In this sense, “one nation, two cultures” is normality for America. And the process works both ways: the restless dynamism that destroys the static good also goes on to destroy the horrors it itself spawns. It is not only decent men and women who are crushed beneath the juggernaut wheels.

Gertrude Himmelfarb, while right-

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ly deploring many diseased aspects of contemporary America, is too truthful and too good a historian to omit signs of health. She cites the remarkable recent statistics showing the fall in crime, including the 75-percent drop in the annual rate of homicides in New York City. In the latter half of the 90's, the number of people on welfare dropped by a third, and decreases were likewise recorded in illegitimate births, teenage pregnancies, abortions, and the rate of divorces.

Another fact she notes is that while, from 1990 to 1996, undergraduate enrollments in public colleges increased by only 4 percent, and in private colleges by only 5 percent, in evangelical colleges they rose by a whopping 25 percent. Catholic and Jewish "day schools," which maintain traditional standards of discipline and hard work, are flourishing as never before. Think about that: in an age where knowledge is more closely linked to wealth than ever before, parents wishing to give their children a head start must send them to a religious school. There is another rich paradox here, one that recalls John Locke's complacent judgment about the birth of commercial society in England: "Today, morality is much the best bargain."

But then, America is the land of paradox as well as the land of excess. At the beginning of her book, Himmelfarb quotes Adam Smith's opinion that, "in every civilized society," it is normal to have "two different schemes or systems of morality current at the same time"—the one "strict or austere," the other "liberal or loose." The industrious working class, Smith argued, has to be strict, because its members will not physically survive if they give way to vice; by contrast, "people of fashion" can afford to indulge in bad habits. The same remains true today, with this difference: the entire population, from skilled workers upward, can now afford a bit of debauchery if it pleases. To that extent, working-class morality is no longer

a countervailing social pillar—a fact that, in my view, saved Bill Clinton from removal from office, or in any event sustained his poll ratings.

At the same time, and by still another of those American paradoxes, Clinton is a despised figure, held in contempt and largely rejected. As this one example shows, it is impossible these days to present a simple picture of moral trends in America. The nation is bigger and more diverse than ever before, its hedonism more frenetic but its puritanism also taking new forms. An example of the latter, and one that both amazes Europeans and makes some of them envious, is that up to two million American children, whose parents have become appalled by the disastrous condition of the public schools, are now educated at home—something Europe does not permit by law.

America is the freest country on earth, and that freedom is its salvation. It is freedom that makes it possible for every American to fight the good fight in the culture wars that seem periodically to be America's lot—and that Gertrude Himmelfarb dissects here with her customary luminous intelligence, her finely balanced sensibility, and her sharp pen.

Lamp of the Lord

The Great Poems of the Bible:
A Reader's Companion with
New Translations

by James L. Kugel

Free Press. 350 pp. \$23.00

Reviewed by
Algis Valiunas

A BOOK like James L. Kugel's *The Great Poems of the Bible* could probably have been conceived only in the modern age, which has dispensed with the notion of biblical

ALGIS VALIUNAS writes on cultural and literary matters for COMMENTARY and other periodicals.

truth and finds the Bible's principal glory in its literary art. Yet Kugel, a professor of Hebrew literature at Harvard, is himself no unbelieving aesthete; when he was asked to compile a selection of biblical poetry, a part of him resisted the very thought: "even the idea of making a selection—sifting through the Bible to find its high points, as it were—was bound to be somewhat repugnant to anyone who, like me, thinks of it all as sacred Scripture." One is therefore doubly glad that Kugel got over his repugnance, for he has produced both beautiful translations of beloved passages from the Hebrew Bible and inspired essays on "the spiritual reality" those passages evoke.

Good as his translations are, the essays are even better. Kugel balks at calling them commentaries, which implies philological close work, or historical criticism, with its emphasis on cultural background and textual development. Rather, he is trying to recover "a certain way of perceiving, [which] has gradually closed inside of us, so that nowadays most people simply do not register, or do not have access to, what had been visible in an earlier age." He is after nothing less than the heart of the matter: what we know of Who God is, and where we stand in relation to Him—in short, what people always turned to the Bible to find, until it lost its unique status and became just another book among many.

The great poems that Kugel translates comprise seven Psalms; passages from the prophetic writings of Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Micah; and selections from Samuel, Job, Judges, Proverbs, the Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes. In writing about them, as about the numerous other passages he cites and translates, he helps us understand, first of all, what precisely biblical poetry is. What marks it, Kugel writes (he is hardly the first to point this out), is not rhyme or meter but rather a kind of formalized sentence structure that is repeated over and over,

each sentence made up of two parts, each part a phrase or clause usually no more than three or four words long, the second part being a symmetrical extension of the first.

This characteristic two-part sentence, Kugel suggests, was derived from a more loose-jointed, "seconding" style in which successive brief phrases were linked by a studied echoing effect. Here, for example, is the account in Judges of Yael's killing of the Canaanite general Sisera:

He went down between her feet, fell down, splayed out;
between her feet down he went, fallen; and where he went down, that's where he stayed fallen, the oppressor.

The more formal style attained perhaps its most pronounced refinement in the grand utterances of the Prophets, as in this typical passage from Isaiah:

Now I will bring your children from the east, and from the west I will gather you up.

I will say to the north wind, "Come on!" and to the south wind, "Don't hold back!"

Give me My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth!"

Kugel helps us to see how the Bible's use of formal poetic style can achieve a variety of rhetorical effects. With unsparing directness, Amos condemns the voluptuaries who fill their bellies while ignoring the hungry:

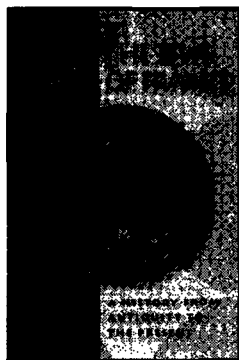
Hear this prophecy, you Bashan cows on Samaria's hill—

you who swindle the poor, extort the needy,

then say to your husbands, "Honey, go get us something to drink."

To take another example: the decidedly plainspoken, even rustic, style of the Song of Songs establishes the innocent beauty of its unabashed eroticism, which in rabbinic tradition also bespeaks the love of Israel for God. By contrast, no biblical book is more terrible than Lamentations, whose subject is the Babylonian siege and conquest of Jerusalem; yet this account of war's horrors, in which starving women eat their own children, is written in acrostics, the most stylized of biblical literary forms—for Kugel, "an act of control" that embodies "the profound conviction that life must always make sense, and then follows that conviction down into life's darkest corridor."

THIS BRINGS us to the "spiritual reality" that Kugel wishes to illuminate through his analyses of biblical poems. It simply does not occur to anyone in the Bible, he writes, to declare that there is no God. Even



The Jews of France

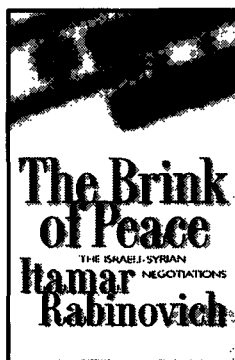
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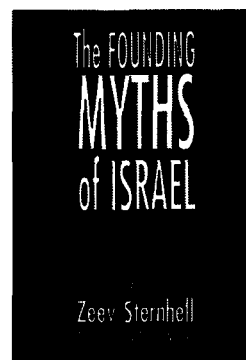
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the blasphemers who deny His power or His goodness do not question His existence. God is ever and unmistakably present, and He has an unfailing knack for getting men's attention. "A man's soul is the lamp of the Lord, who searches out his innermost parts," says Proverbs. In the very center of every human being, the soul is an outpost of divinity, and it never lets one forget for long Who is proprietor.

Biblical poets do not talk of God after the fashion of theologians, trying to piece together an intelligible explanation; rather, they present the living God as He appears to a few select men in His terrifying inexplicable majesty. Kugel cites an exchange in which the prophet Jeremiah seeks an answer to a fundamental question of earthly justice:

You will always win, O Lord,
whenever I lodge a complaint
against You;

still, I would address You on a
matter of law.

Why is it that wicked men prosper,
why do liars and backstabbers thrive?

The Lord's response suggests that this is the wrong question: "If you topple over when things are fine, what will you do when the Jordan floods its banks?" Rather than explaining why He has made the world as it is, God indicates instead that Jeremiah needs to find the strength to face the world's cruelty—for things can always get much worse. As Kugel observes, "This [answer] hardly contributes to the debate on unjustified suffering or the apparent prosperity of the wicked, but it provides something else, actual footage of the real prophet and how God answered his question one day." To put it another way: bumping up against what we cannot expect to know helps us

come to grips with what we can, and indeed had better, know.

KNOWING, FEARING, and loving the Lord are the intricately braided main themes of Kugel's book. He notes that the Bible makes a distinction between "fear of God" and "fear of the Lord." The former, he writes, "actually has nothing to do specifically with the religion of Israel"; it refers, rather, to "common decency," which anyone will practice who realizes that he is small and weak while God is big and strong. The latter includes both the awareness that Jews in particular owe the Lord certain reverent duties and the behavior that necessarily follows from that awareness.

To moderns, fear and love typically have little in common. But in the Hebrew Bible they are not so far apart: as Deuteronomy puts it, "But now, Israel, what does the Lord your God demand of you, save that you fear the Lord your God, follow all his ways and love Him?" The obedience that man shows God is itself an act of love; and this love is reciprocated. Elsewhere in Deuteronomy, Kugel notes, images of intimacy highlight the divine tenderness toward Israel: God, a loving father, carries His people "like an eagle carrying his young on his wings as they learn to fly, and they are dearer to Him than the pupil of His eye." Similarly, the psalmist acknowledges joyfully and repeatedly God's nearness and dearness: "For You have been my benefactor since the womb, my support even at my mother's breast"; "though my soul is filled up as with a feast, my lips and mouth keep praising"; "even if my mother and father should abandon me, the Lord will take me up."

In an elegant summation, Kugel does away once and for all with the notion that the God of the Hebrew Bible is a harsh, distant, unforgiving Lord:

The fear of the Lord, it is tempting to say, apprehended God on the outside. He was there, the

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Great King, and He is to be worshiped and served. But in the world of the soul, the great Outside and inside meet. God was no longer remote; He was the "living God," right here. And so, the God of the "fear of the Lord" was no longer only outside and no longer only fearsome. It is in the Psalms that one finds the fullest expression of this spiritual truth.

This is but one of numerous spiritual truths to which Kugel astutely points the way in *The Great Poems of the Bible*. They may seem obvious enough once they have been brought to one's attention, yet one would likely never have noticed them without his help. Although Kugel's translations will hardly supersede the peerless solemn magnificence of the King James Version, they are supple, graceful, vigorous, and far preferable to most English renderings in our parched age. As for the commentaries, if one may call them that despite Kugel's disclaimer, they are models of what criticism at its most serious can achieve. This is a book to be cherished.

Back to the Future

The Schools Our
Children Deserve:
Moving Beyond Traditional
Classrooms and
"Tougher Standards"
by Alfie Kohn

Houghton Mifflin. 344 pp. \$24.00

Reviewed by
Mark Goldblatt

THAT AMERICAN schools are currently being swept by a "back-to-basics" movement is hardly news. Every day brings fresh word of

MARK GOLDBLATT, a new contributor, teaches remedial English at the Fashion Institute of Technology of the State University of New York.

our students' poor performance in some core subject—embarrassingly low math and science scores as compared with other Western nations, runaway failure rates in reading among inner-city grade-schoolers. Many parents, educators, and public officials have sensibly concluded that the remedy for this deficit is a return to fundamentals, backed up by rigorous testing.

Just how American schools managed to stray so far from the basics is likewise no mystery. Much of the immediate blame lies with the trendy pedagogy introduced in the late 1960's under the banner of "progressive" education. Across the country, teachers imbued with this creed began to emphasize creativity over right answers, self-esteem over measurable achievement, and community spirit over individual effort. Predictably enough, test scores began to drop.

Alfie Kohn, the author of several previous books on American ed-

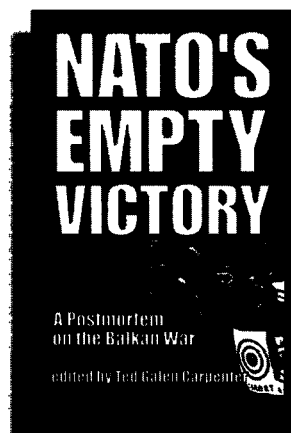
ucation, knows all this history, but he has an unusual take on it. He believes that the problem with today's schools is not a lack of traditional instruction but a surfeit of it. Despite the transformations of the last 30 years, he passionately argues, our classrooms are not nearly "progressive" enough. Indeed, as Kohn sees it, the push for higher standards in American education can only serve to place our children at a still greater distance from "true learning."

ACCORDING TO Kohn, traditionalists approach education as if it were a manufacturing process. Students are the raw material, and schools—through the use of tools like lectures, textbooks, worksheets, and grades—are expected to shape them into a particular kind of product, possessing "very specific skills and bits of knowledge." Kohn finds the roots of this view in the work of the behaviorist psychologist B.F. Skin-

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ner and the testing pioneer Edward Thorndike, and he points to the education writer E.D. Hirsch as its leading present-day exponent, deriding Hirsch's widely publicized program of "cultural literacy" as "bunch o' facts" pedagogy.

Rather than teaching children how to think, Kohn contends, traditionalists focus on the mere transmission of information, embodied in standardized curricula. The tell-tale sign of this benighted approach is drilling—memory exercises on everything from state capitals and the multiplication tables to vocabulary and the parts of speech. A teacher of traditionalist bent will thus spend a great deal of time defining a word like "nationalism," Kohn laments, while ignoring the opportunity to discuss with students "what the world would be like if there were no countries."

By contrast, the "progressive" model of education championed by

Kohn has very different origins and aims. It flows, he informs us, from the work of the pragmatist philosopher John Dewey and the psychologist Jean Piaget. In their view, education should aspire to be responsive to the needs and interests of students, allowing them to instruct themselves insofar as possible and to judge things on their own. The by-word—and highest goal—of such instruction is "critical thinking."

That pedagogy of this sort often leaves students with a poor command of standard usage does not trouble Kohn. To appreciate the advantages of progressive education, he argues, we must discard such outmoded benchmarks, and he regales us with wonderful anecdotes of classroom breakthroughs to illustrate the resultant benefits. In his book, teachers at their most inspiring are seen operating without aid of script or textbook while helping students to solve truly challenging problems. Such are

the rewards, he proclaims, that await us once we shed our preoccupation with "performance! results! achievement! success!" and devote ourselves instead to the wondrous and ongoing process of learning.

IN SHORT, by the time he is through, Alfie Kohn has managed to recreate every pie-in-the-sky argument for "progressive" education that has bedeviled the theory and practice of American schooling from Dewey to the present day. And he has also managed to heap contumely on the vast majority of Americans who persist in believing that, upon receiving a high-school diploma, a student should be able to read well, write competently, calculate quickly and correctly, and actually know a range of historical, cultural, and scientific facts about the world in which he lives. To Kohn, this makes his fellow Americans enemies of "critical thinking."

But this is nonsense. The truth, as E.D. Hirsch and others have long argued, is that possessing a certain amount of basic knowledge is the prerequisite for any kind of genuine intellectual engagement. In Kohn's dark musings, this renewed commitment to the basics—a project whose prime movers he identifies as Christian extremists, conservative ideologues, and the greedy forces of corporate America—is not simply wrong, it is cruel. But the truth is again the opposite: the ideas Kohn promotes have themselves been responsible for decades of educational cruelty.

Among the children of the better-off, the effects of "progressive" pedagogy have perhaps been mitigated by the advantages with which they begin life. But for students from more deprived circumstances, especially in our inner cities, "progressive" education has been a disaster, denying them the basic skills that are their ticket to better lives. Is it foolhardy to expect such grim considerations to trouble the dreams of a self-described "progressive"? Evidently so.

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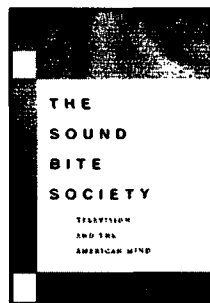
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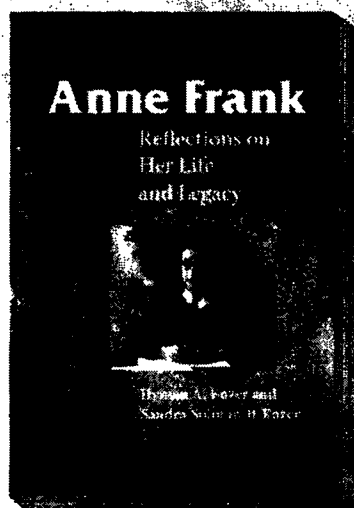
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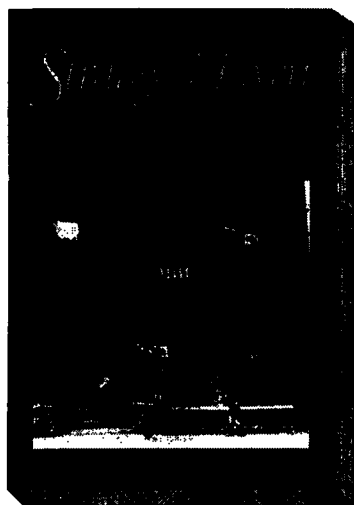
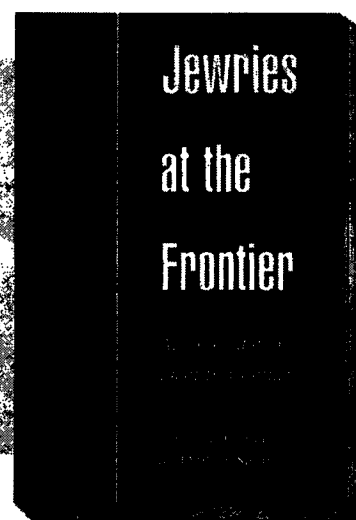
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The Eastern Question

Empires of the Sand: The Struggle for Mastery in the Middle East, 1789-1923

by Efraim Karsh & Inari Karsh

Harvard. 409 pp. \$29.95

Reviewed by
Daniel Pipes

IN *A tour de force* that offers a profoundly new understanding of a key issue in modern Middle Eastern history, Efraim and Inari Karsh review the relations between Europe and the Ottoman empire in the final century-and-a-half of the latter's existence, and in the process nearly reverse the standard historical interpretation. According to that interpretation, from about the time of the

DANIEL PIPES, a historian by training, is director of the Middle East Forum in Philadelphia.

French Revolution until World War I, a dynamic, arrogant, imperial Europe imposed its will on a static, humiliated, supine East. This framework is common to nearly every leading historian, almost regardless of era or political disposition.

Thus, in the first half of this century, when diplomatic history was in vogue, the notion of an active Europe and a passive Middle East undergirded the whole study of the "Eastern Question": that huge set of international issues created by the weakness of the Ottoman empire and its gradual dissolution. Almost without exception, studies of this topic concentrated on decisions made in London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, and Moscow—with little notice given to Istanbul, Cairo, and Teheran, locales that basically serve as the background for European action. Right at the start of *A Peace to End All Peace* (1989), his excellent survey of the impact of World War I

on the Middle East, David Fromkin makes this point explicit: "Middle Eastern personalities, circumstances, and political cultures," he writes, "do not figure a great deal in the narrative that follows, except when I suggest the outlines and dimensions of what European politicians were ignoring when they made their decisions."

Even scholars who focus on the Middle East itself have accepted this premise. L. Carl Brown, the distinguished Princeton historian, observes that the modern Middle East "has been so continuously interlocked with the West as to have become almost an appendage of the Western political system." In his masterful survey, *The Middle East: A Brief History of the Last 2,000 Years* (1996), Bernard Lewis offers a more nuanced formulation, writing that after 1800, "the course of events in the Middle East [was] profoundly influenced, and in times of crisis dominated, by the interests, ambitions, and actions of the European Great Powers."

Here is where the Karshes, a husband-and-wife team, step in. In *Empires of the Sand*,* they characterize the standard account as "fundamentally misconceived." Middle Easterners, they assert, "were not hapless victims of predatory imperial powers but active participants in the restructuring of their region." Put more directly:

Twentieth-century Middle Eastern history is essentially the culmination of long-standing *indigenous* trends, passions, and patterns of behavior rather than an externally imposed dictate. Great-power influences, however potent, have played a secondary role, constituting neither the primary force behind the region's political development nor the main cause of its notorious volatility.

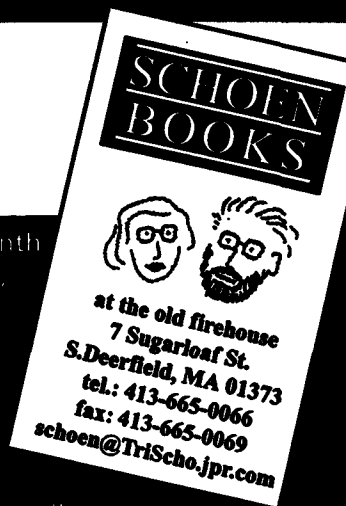
* This book would have been better served with a more accurate subtitle, for it deals not with the Middle East as such but with the Ottoman state—which explains why the Balkans receive more attention than Iran.

Once upon a time, there was a young man named Ken who collected books. Soon, there were so many books, and so little room, that he realized he had to become a bookdealer and move to bigger digs.

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DRAWING ON a wide range of original sources, and writing in a clearly organized fashion and in fast-paced prose, the Karshes make a very compelling case for their revisionist position, establishing it point by point and in elegant detail.

Let me draw attention to three points where their researches are of particular significance. First, why did the Ottomans decide—disastrously, as it turned out—to enter World War I on the German side? In the consensus view, this resulted from (in the phrasing of the historian Howard M. Sachar) a “stupendous” coup by Berlin, which pulled the wool over the eyes of the credulous Ottomans. The Karshes find this exactly wrong; they show how Ottoman leaders *initiated* talks with Germany to explore an alliance, and document the lukewarm reception accorded to these addresses by many German officials. Far from having been dictated by Berlin, the Ot-

toman decision was a supremely reckless gamble by headstrong young rulers engaged in “an imperialist bid for territorial expansion and restoration of lost glory.” It was also “by far the most important decision in the history of the modern Middle East,” leading as it soon did to the fall of the empire and the emergence of the strife-filled order that still prevails today.

A second point involves the modern Arab dream of a single Arabic-speaking country stretching from the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf. The standard account blames European maneuvering for the failure of this grand ambition, but once again the Karshes turn the argument on its head. Left to their own fractious politics, the Arabs, they suggest, would actually have ended up with even more, and smaller, states than was the case: “great-power interference ensured the advent of a string of Middle Eastern

states that were significantly larger than the political entities that would otherwise have been created.”

Finally, there is the notoriously disputed subject of Middle Eastern boundaries. Arabs routinely heap blame on the Sykes-Picot agreement of May 1916—a secret deal by Britain, France, and Russia to divide up the Middle East—for their still-festering border quarrels. In *The Arab Awakening*, a very influential study published in 1938, George Antonius denounced that agreement as a “shocking document” and a “breach of faith” by the great powers. Still today, the Assad regime ruling in Syria denounces the long-ago Sykes-Picot deal as the source of the “false borders” that divide the Middle East and have caused so many problems. Most scholars echo this view. But the Karshes boldly present Sykes-Picot as honorable—an honest attempt by the British to reconcile their prior obligations to

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France with their new ones to the Arabs. In a statement bound to cause scholarly heartburn, they praise Sykes-Picot as the "first ever great-power recognition of the Arabs' right to self-determination."

On a wide range of other issues, too, this wall-to-wall revisionist account upends the conventional narrative. It establishes that Ottoman (and not Russian) aggressiveness caused the Turks to lose control of the Balkans; that Great Britain found itself ruling Egypt more on account of Ottoman mistakes than out of its own imperial desires; that the Arab Revolt of World War I was inspired less by nationalist sentiments or other "lofty ideals" than by "the glitter of British gold." More broadly, the Karshes also turn around the usual argument for British duplicity in World War I, pinning this charge instead on the Arabs. Arab leaders, they demonstrate, made fraudulent claims about the extent of their own political authority, gave empty promises of military action, and bargained continuously with the Central Powers with an eye to double-crossing the British.

IN ALL, I can hardly remember last reading so important and daring a reinterpretation of Middle Eastern history, or one so laden with implications. Already the Karshes' radical rejection of prevailing wisdom has prompted strong reactions from the scholarly community, as anyone visiting the relevant websites can attest. In time, indeed, some of their views may end up being refuted or heavily qualified. Nevertheless, their key ideas are likely to prevail, and even to become the new standard account. And who knows? This book could eventually affect the academic study of other areas of East-West contact, including Africa, India, and East Asia.

Conceivably it could affect political attitudes as well—and much for the better. *Empires of the Sand* shreds the main reason for Europeans to feel guilt-ridden toward the Mid-

dle East. If Sykes-Picot was not a "breach of faith," and if the British and French generally behaved with at least as much honor as their Middle Eastern counterparts, might not the British, the French, and other Europeans begin to rethink their stock responses to the issues that currently bedevil the region?

And why stop with Europeans? Arab Middle Easterners have long sought comfort in the notion of their victimization at the hands of the perfidious, conspiratorial West. By coming instead to accept that they themselves largely created their own destiny and made their own history in the 20th century, they might persuade themselves they can do the same in the 21st—only this time by throwing off their habitual sense of grievance, reigning in their autocratic rulers, reforming their moribund economies, and overcoming their radical ideologies.

Liberalism & Its Discontents

The Quest for Cosmic Justice
by Thomas Sowell

Free Press. 214 pp. \$25.00

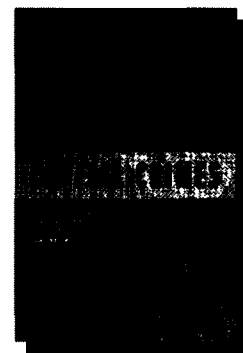
Reviewed by
Arch Puddington

THOMAS SOWELL has long been recognized as one of America's leading conservative thinkers. In books like *Knowledge and Decisions* (1980), *Ethnic America* (1981), *A Conflict of Visions* (1987), *Race and Culture* (1995), and *Migrations and Cultures* (1996), he has tackled an astonishingly broad range of subjects, displaying fearlessness, intelligence, and erudition along the way.

ARCH PUDDINGTON, vice president for research at Freedom House, is the author of *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*, forthcoming from the University Press of Kentucky.

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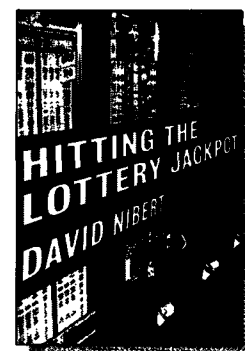
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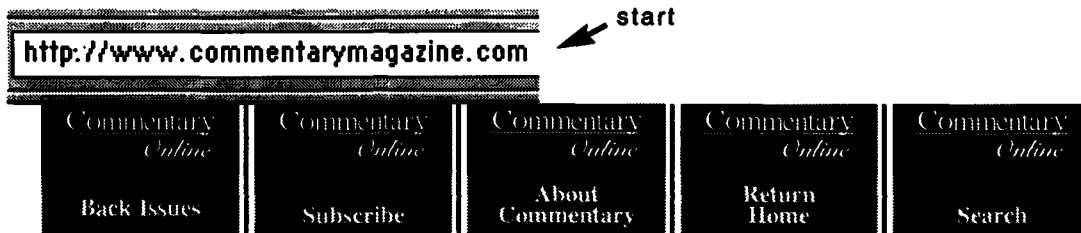
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One theme that runs through Sowell's impressive output is the corrupt state of the contemporary liberal agenda; he has been among the most influential critics of affirmative action and other forms of racial preferences, and has written eloquently—and angrily—about the damage done to black children by the more insidious nostrums of liberal social reform. In his latest book, Sowell takes this theme one step farther by advancing a sweeping theory to explain why liberalism has been wrong—dangerously wrong, in his view—on such disparate issues as war and peace, race, capitalism, and education.

According to Sowell, today's liberalism has abandoned the search for justice as that concept has traditionally been understood. Rather, it is engaged in a "quest for cosmic justice." The advocates of cosmic justice seek not simply to establish equality under the law but rather to eliminate *all* kinds of inequality, including inequality created by nature, or the "cosmos," itself.

Sowell adduces numerous examples of what he has in mind. In the realm of social policy, for example, instead of seeking to provide medical treatment and social services for the retarded or mentally ill, proponents of cosmic justice attempt to overcome the very fact of disability by "mainstreaming" the disabled into the educational system and the workforce. At the same time, they are completely indifferent to the hardships imposed on both the ostensible beneficiaries of their policies and society at large.

Indeed, as Sowell points out, it is often the intended beneficiaries who become the victims of cosmic justice. Thus, the widespread adoption of bilingual education, a policy aimed at rectifying the "unfair" fact that the children of most immigrants do not know English, has done inestimable damage to a generation of Hispanic students. In similar fashion, racial preferences have contributed to an affirmative-

action mindset among young blacks, allowing them to reap tangible rewards while simultaneously encouraging a lack of effort.

In substituting the utopian goal of equal outcomes for equal opportunity, the proponents of cosmic justice, Sowell contends, have also posed a serious threat to the rule of law and to the practice of democratic self-governance. Vast power has already been or may become vested in the hands of bureaucrats and judges who, for all the authority they wield, are incapable of intervening wisely or of determining who deserves their ministrations and who does not.

Unless action is taken to counter the growing influence of cosmic-justice liberals, America, Sowell concludes, will evolve into a society whose defining characteristic is "a monumental concentration of political power which reduces everyone to a client of politicians." The economy will be suffocated, and our

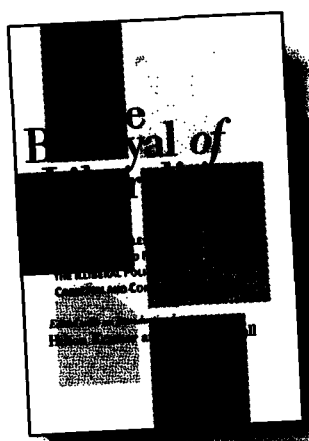
political freedom may stand forfeit as well. What we face, in short, is nothing less than the "quiet repeal of the American Revolution."

SOWELL is undoubtedly correct that the utopian agenda of a major strand of contemporary liberalism has been misguided and anti-democratic, and has had and continues to have deleterious consequences for American society across the board. But whether our country is in the desperate straits he suggests is another question. As in the case of other recent, pessimistic accounts of our condition, one is ineluctably drawn to point to countervailing factors.

Thus, after experiencing a spasm of foreign-policy disarray and domestic social and economic decline during the 1970's, American voters did do what many at the time considered unthinkable—they elected Ronald Reagan, an avowed conservative, as President. The result: victory in the cold war and a necessary,

What liberalism means and what it stands for now

The Betrayal of Liberalism



EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
HILTON KRAMER AND ROGER KIMBALL

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if painful, reorientation of our economy toward a high-technology global market. More recently, rejecting the elite view that nothing could be done to control violent crime and urban deterioration, American voters, to the astonishment of the liberal world, elected a generation of tough-minded mayors who have succeeded in cutting crime, luring business investment into the inner city, and enhancing the quality of urban life. Finally, fears for the future of capitalism seem especially misplaced at a time when congressional Democrats have embraced efforts at deregulation, a Democratic administration has made the promotion of American business interests a major priority, and the economy is booming as never before.

One suspects that much of Sowell's distemper stems from the very real intractability of racial preferences. Despite the increasingly visible harm wrought by affirmative

action, and despite the fact that in poll after poll Americans have expressed their opposition to this policy, the political establishment has resisted change. Liberals have devised a new rationale for affirmative action by citing the need for workplace and educational "diversity." Republicans, for their part, duck the question out of fear of being labeled racists. Here is truly an issue on which Sowell stands on solid ground.

Still, even affirmative action has not proved *wholly* immune to democratic demands for a change of direction. Racial preferences in college admissions have suffered reversals in recent court decisions, not to mention the passage of anti-affirmative-action referenda in both California and the state of Washington. But beyond that, it may be that the general issue of racial justice has to be considered a special category. True, the fact that many Americans still

retain feelings of guilt over our history of slavery and segregation does not excuse the dishonest and undemocratic methods used to impose preferences on American institutions. But it does suggest that those who support affirmative action do not necessarily harbor a broader covert agenda to extend state control over society as a whole.

IF CONSERVATIVES have learned anything from recent history, it is that success requires confidence in the American people and in the functioning of American democracy, a lesson that applies to the war of ideas no less than to electoral politics. We will surely be unable to secure further victories in that war if we overlook those battles already won. After all, it is thanks in no small measure to Thomas Sowell's carefully reasoned and impassioned arguments over the years that we have made as much progress as we have.

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by Walter Russell Mead

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